

Have confidence in own ability, Dr M

Vision, faith and

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By Vijayan Menon

KUALA LUMPUR, Sun. — Malaysians must have faith in their ability to achieve the objectives of Vision 2020 although the path towards developed nation status is not easy and will be full of challenges, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said.

The Prime Minister said that since Independence, the people have succeeded in overcoming many barriers and managed to equip themselves with knowledge and skills they never had before.

"By increasing our efforts and determination, God willing, our vision will become a reality," Dr Mahathir said in his National Day message over radio and television tonight.

To become a developed nation, Dr Mahathir said, political stability, unity and sustainable economic growth must be ensured.

"We must continue to cooperate and be united. We must also be wary of others who are out to disrupt the unity among the races.

"If we do not unite, then our objective of becoming a developed nation will not be realised. I am confident that Malaysians who love peace and stability will do everything possible to avoid disrupting this harmony."

He said when the country achieved Independence 35 years ago, many people predicted that it would collapse because it was multiracial, multicultural and multireligious.

But now, he said, Malaysia had proven to the world that its multiracial nature did not prevent it from achieving progress and success.

"Although we have been successful in our development these past 35 years, we must always be wary and continue to strive hard. The Government has outlined a

vision of a developed nation towards which we should strive."

This year's theme "Vision — The Basis of Progress" was therefore most appropriate and consistent with the objective set for the year 2020.

Dr Mahathir also said as an independent nation, Malaysia had to guard its dignity and sovereignty. A poor nation would not only be a burden to its people but would also not gain the respect of others.

"A poor nation will not be able to act freely because it is too dependent on the help and goodwill of others. If we do not attempt to forge ahead from now on, we will remain a poor nation."

If this happened, he said, then the tragic situation experienced by a number of countries will befall Malaysia.

"If this occurs then our independence, of which we are so proud, will no longer be meaningful. What is the meaning of independence if, because we are weak and poor, we are unable to defend the truth.

"Of what use is an independent nation, if its people live in misery and is perpetually dependent on the charity of others?" he asked.

He said that to protect Malaysia's dignity and sovereignty as a truly independent country, the people must transform it into a developed nation, comparable to other advanced nations.

Dr Mahathir also said Malaysians are fortunate because they do not encounter any racial or religious conflicts as in the case of some countries which resulted in the loss of lives and destruction of property.

He said the country's multiracial population had been able to live harmoniously, united and with mutual respect and understanding.

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