

PM: MALAYSIA MODEL FOR ALL

By P.K. KATHARASON

TAWAU: Malaysia has become a model nation where no one race or religion felt threatened, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said yesterday.

The Prime Minister said Malaysians from Perlis to Sabah stood as a Malaysian race and this made the country one of the most developed in the world since gaining independence.

"We feel safe in Malaysia. We live peacefully and harmoniously because no one race or religion feel threatened by another," he told thousands of people at a Barisan Nasional gathering at the town padang here to commemorate the formation of Malaysia.

Dr Mahathir, whose speech was televised live, said the colonialists had predicted that Malaysia would be in chaos and no development would take

No one feels threatened, says Mahathir

place after independence.

"They said (that this was because) we cannot administer a multiracial society," he said.

He said the fact was that today, Malaysia had not only developed and progressed but had proven the colonialists wrong.

Dr Mahathir, citing the independent states of the former Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia as examples, said that in Malaysia the people would not fight one another.

He said Malaysians should remind themselves of the problems faced by such small nations and how the colonialists took over the various Malaysian states.

"Our source of strength has been in uniting all the races and with the formation of Malaysia and stand-

ing up to neighbouring countries during the confrontation period (before 1963)," he added.

Dr Mahathir said it was fortunate that Sabah and Sarawak chose to be independent through Malaysia and reminded Sabahans to think as Malaysians of one nation for a better future as in other states.

He said Sabah chose to be independent through Malaysia and the occasion was to have been on Aug 31, 1963, but bureaucratic problems caused the delay in the formation of Malaysia.

He added that the date Sept 16, 1963, for Malaysia's formation was decided on by a UN mission.

Dr Mahathir also cautioned Sabahans against certain quarters using Sept 16 as an issue in trying to split Sabah from the Peninsula.

Dr Mahathir said Sept 16 was a historic day and must be celebrated but priority must be given to Merdeka Day, Aug 31, 1957.

Dr Mahathir also said that during his trips overseas, he felt sad when foreigners asked if Christians in Sabah were persecuted in Sabah.

He said certain local people had made such allegations because they wanted sympathy to cover up their own misdeeds.

He said the Barisan never persecuted Christians but had, in fact, always practised racial and religious tolerance.

He added that the Barisan hoped to form the next Sabah Government to unite the people there.

—Malaysia Daily Office.