

Malaysia needs to develop to help others, says PM

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MALAYSIA'S aspiration to become a developed nation within the next three decades is not **only** aimed at enabling the **people to enjoy** the better **things** in life but also to **enhance the** country's dignity and gain the ability to help other less fortunate countries and peoples.

This is why Malaysia needs **development** and to be economically strong as without this, the nation's independence will be meaningless, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir **Mohamad said** yesterday.

It is only when Malaysia becomes fully developed that it will be able to effectively free itself from all forms of external pressures, he said. "**We** are unlike the US, **Russia**, the UK, France and Germany. Our **ability** to protect **those** who are **victimised** is **still** very limited," he added when **addressing** an Ex-Servicemen Association of Malaysia gathering at Stadium Negara.

"We also want to become fully developed because only by doing so can Malaysians be respected by others," he added.

Today, Malaysia is still weak and is easily pressured by major powers, be it in economics, politics or security, he said.

Malaysia's independence is restricted to its ability to exercise political freedom only within the country. "**And** even despite this domestic freedom, attempts **are** still being made by others to interfere in our affairs," he added.

Fortunately, thus far, the country is still able to defend its **political** independence within its own boundaries due to its developing and prospering economy.

But in other matters, **Malaysia** is still not completely free, Dr Mahathir said. There are still parties out there who are trying to undermine Malaysia's efforts at economic growth.

"For example, some **foreign** parties are trying to influence certain segments of our society," **he said**, adding that they (outsiders) know that if Malaysia becomes **economically** successful, its independence will be **true** in every sense of the word.

The Prime Minister said that in the case of the atrocities committed in **Bosnia-Herzegovina**, had Malaysia been a world power it would have had a say in how the conflict can be resolved.

Unfortunately, Malaysia is small and is still a poor and weak country. As a result, as the violent crimes against humanity persist in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Malaysians can only sit and watch helplessly.

"There is simply nothing that we can do. Even to send our troops to Bosnia, we still need the **(defence) equipment** that **is produced and** controlled by others," Dr Mahathir said.