

PM: Have faith in Government's ability to implement the Outlandish ideas can work.

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KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. — Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said Malaysians should not reject outright ideas which may appear outlandish, adding that sufficient faith should be placed in the Government's ability to make them work.

The Prime Minister said that in the interest of developing the country, the Government may, off and on, come up with outlandish ideas and hoped they would not be rejected off-hand.

"Of course, the Government must have the necessary ideas, skills and sense of responsibility. That this Government has all these can be gauged from the results."

He said even the World Bank had acknowledged that Malaysia had performed extremely well economically and was an example to other developing nations.

Dr Mahathir said: "While we have a right to congratulate ourselves, we must also learn to understand why we have been able to overcome our many handicaps.

He added that at a time when the country was doubling its efforts to realise the targets set under Vision 2020, the opening of Pernas Sogo marked yet another step in the standard and way of life which the people could expect with development.

"Small businesses will probably be affected but they too must adjust to a new way of life. The establishment of these complexes creates new business opportunities and revalues upward their assets.

"Theirs will not be a total loss. Indeed, if they are willing to change they will gain from the changed way of life that goes with development."

He added there was a need to adjust to a more affluent lifestyle, not because of snob value but there was money to be made from affluent living.

"To use highly valuable space for low-value business will be a great waste. Retailers and even hawkers operating *gerai* must be more conscious of the need to cater to a more affluent clientele.

"If the authorities seemed to be unduly strict with

"In the first place, we are politically stable. When we feel safe, we do not have to pander to extremist sectarian demands which are invariably selfish and disruptive.

"It is this confidence that has enabled the Government to formulate constructive policies."

The Prime Minister said this at the opening of the Pernas Sogo complex and the Sogo Pernas Department Store in Jalan Tuanku Abdul Rahman here.

Dr Mahathir said the rising affluence of Malaysians had enabled "mega" retailing enterprises to be established such as Yow Chuan, The Mall, Parkson Grand, Metro Jaya, Yaohan, Lot 10, Subang Parade and Ampang Shopping Complex and others.

This has been made possible by the rising per capita incomes of the people. Malaysia's per capita income increased from RM6,238 in 1990 to RM8,550 last year.

Dr Mahathir said the increase, together with low inflation enabled Malaysians to enjoy a higher standard of living and a better quality of life.

At the same time, he said, the low inflation caused the country's products to remain competitive at home and abroad contributing to the economic growth of the nation.

hawkers, it was because they could no longer accept a dirty, unhealthy and un-aesthetic environment.

"Besides, they know that the so-called small businesses can afford it and they will naturally make more by being cleaner and more aesthetically presentable."

He added the enforcement of higher standards would actually increase the profits of small businesses.

Dr Mahathir said Pernas Sogo has done the city a good service by helping the Government remove the shabby flats of the former Sulaiman Court. This replacement would renew the area and add value to the city, he added.

Dr Mahathir said the presence of the Japanese would provide keen competition and lead to rapid upgrading and sophistication.

The Prime Minister added Kuala Lumpur was not known as a shopping centre for foreign tourists who usually opted for Singapore, Hong Kong or Bangkok as their shopping destinations.

"This is unfortunate, for the tourists are really missing a good bargain. It is not generally known among travellers that most consumer goods are tax-free in Malaysia, besides the numerous tax-free shops for

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Malaysia a good place for tourists

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tourists," he said. He said Malaysia was a good place for tourists to shop and this had to be made known.

"Besides, the low cost of living means low overheads for Malaysian retailers. Goods should, therefore, be cheaper in Malaysia than elsewhere.

"With the opening of more outlets, the range of goods will be as wide as in the better-known shopping destinations."

He said tourists should be made aware of this fact by the shops selling at bargain prices.

"It will be a mistake on the part of the Malaysian retailers to go for short-term profits rather than long-term gains."

The Prime Minister said that while the Government welcomed the participation of well-known foreign retailers in the retail business in

Malaysia, he hoped that Malaysian retailers would learn to upgrade their retailing methods and skills so as to be as good as their foreign counterparts.

"One day we hope to see Malaysian department stores operating in other countries."

The 10-storey Sogo Pernas Department Store is Southeast Asia's largest department store and offers quality goods catering to the middle- and upper-income groups.

The store, spread over 5,220 square metres, took 31 months to complete and was built on the site of the former Sulaiman Court.

Dr Mahathir, who was accompanied by his wife Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali, were given a tour of the complex by Sogo Company Ltd president Dr Hiroo Mizushima and Pernas president and chief executive Tunku Tan Sri Shahrizan Tunku Sulaiman.