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Dr Mahathir dedicates his two awards to all Malaysians

Tengku Sariffuddin; Radzi Sapiee

KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. - Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad tonight dedicated the two international awards conferred on him recently to all Malaysians, saying that their support and contributions had made it possible for the country to achieve success.

The Prime Minister said Malaysia was successful because it enjoyed political stability and its people were easy to govern, and that this had enabled the Government to implement its policies smoothly.

He said there were many leaders of other countries who were capable but they were not able to carry out programmes and policies as they found it difficult to govern their people.

"Many countries want to know the secret of our success and we tell them. They try to plan well but are still far from being successful."

He said when Malaysia achieved success, the world attributed it to the country's leader being efficient and having integrity.

But, he said, these two qualities alone were not enough without the support of the people.

In Malaysia, Dr Mahathir said, the people were tolerant and peace-loving and though they might have political differences, they did not resort to violence to achieve their goals.

He said Malaysians accepted the democratic principles and worked within the system, accepting the results of elections and preferring to resolve their differences through negotiations.

"Malaysians are easy to lead. We have those who disagree with the Government but they do not cause problems which are difficult to resolve."

"We have elections where opposition parties criticised us and we (the Barisan Nasional) also hit back at them, but there is no riot and the Government is allowed to carry out its duties."

In a jovial mood, the Prime Minister said: "Cuepacs representatives do not resort to industrial action to back their demands."

"If they are not happy, they continue to negotiate. They accept the Government's offers and then make fresh demands."

Dr Mahathir was speaking at a dinner organised by the Cabinet in recognition of him being bestowed the Jawaharlal Nehru Award by India and King Faisal International Award 1997 by Saudi Arabia.

More than 1,000 people attended the dinner at the Putra World Trade Centre.

Also present were his wife, Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamed Ali, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim and his wife, Datin Seri Dr Wan Azizah Ismail, Yang di-Pertuas Negeri, Ministers, Menteri Besar, Chief Ministers, BN and opposition MPs, senior civil servants, corporate and community leaders, representatives of non-governmental organisations, the media, trade unions and foreign missions.

On the awards, the Prime Minister said: "They are for all Malaysians. I only accepted them on the people's behalf."

He then spoke on foreign policy, saying that Malaysia would continue to strengthen ties with other nations and would not interfere in their domestic affairs to pursue mutual benefits.

"We believe in helping other countries, especially our neighbours, to succeed as we too can benefit from their success."

"However, if they criticise us and are rude to us, we will do likewise."

On Vision 2020, Dr Mahathir said Malaysia could achieve the goal by becoming a developed nation based on its own mould.

"God willing, we can achieve our plan and it is up to the leaders after me to improve and fine-tune the Vision."

Anwar, in paying tribute to the Prime Minister, said the awards were not only a recognition of Dr Mahathir as Malaysia's leader but also as a hero of the Islamic world, a spokesman for Third World countries and a world-class statesman.

He said Dr Mahathir had succeeded in transforming Malaysia from the world's foremost rubber and tin exporter into a country widely known for its car industry as well as having the world's tallest building.

"Dr Mahathir also smashed the Western expectation and stereotype that Third World countries must follow them in order to develop."

Under Dr Mahathir's leadership, Malaysia must be developed according to its own mould to achieve success.

"The development must be based on principles of justice, virtues, the spirit of religion and morality as well as enriching the country's culture," Anwar said.

He urged Malaysians to help the country's leaders to develop civilisation, disseminate knowledge, work harder, upgrade the country's image and fight social problems, dadah and bribery.

"We must continue to strive to uphold our stable economic growth and master new technologies.

"We must also act fast to narrow the income gap between the urban and non-urban communities," he added.

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