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PM: Success reflects Bumis' ability to compete

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KUALA LUMPUR, Wed. - The economic achievements of Bumiputeras since independence reflected their ability to compete with other Malaysians, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

The Prime Minister said the Government's efforts to help Bumiputeras had exceeded expectations and this had contributed to the country's multi-racial stability.

"Bumiputeras' success should give them confidence in their abilities and spur them to work harder," he said when opening the Bumiputera Economic Achievements Exposition at the Putra World Trade Centre.

Dr Mahathir, who is Umno president, said it was difficult to imagine during the colonial era that Malaysia could achieve a level of development which other countries would want to emulate.

The race riots of 1969 prompted the Government to introduce programmes to assist Bumiputeras.

"Many approaches were taken," he said. "Some were successful and some failed. We did not succeed fully but it helped reduce ill-feeling among the races."

"In other countries, their social engineering programmes to correct the imbalance within their societies failed."

The 10-day exposition, organised by Wanita Umno, is one of the programmes being held in conjunction with the party's 50th anniversary celebrations last year.

Also present were Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, Datin Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail, Umno supreme council members, Barisan Nasional component party leaders, corporate figures and representatives of foreign missions.

Dr Mahathir said the expo was a good opportunity for Bumiputeras to remind themselves of their achievements.

Bumiputeras, he said, should not be too complacent and they should work harder for further advancement.

"They should be modest in their success," he said, "because they were originally backward."

Dr Mahathir said there Bumiputeras still faced many challenges, especially in information technology.

"But I am confident that Bumiputeras can achieve much progress in the future as they have done now," he said.

Dr Mahathir later toured the exposition and was particularly interested in the Formula One racing circuit masterplan developed by Malaysia Airports Bhd near Sepang.

Wanita Umno chief Datuk Dr Siti Zaharah Sulaiman attributed Bumiputeras' economic achievements to Umno's efforts.

"These achievements would not have happened without the various policies adopted by the party," she said.

The exposition's opening ceremony was broadcast live over the World Wide Web and can be accessed at its website (www.iweb.com.mu/umno.htm). A video of the opening ceremony which includes Dr Mahathir's off-the-cuff speech is also available.

Fifty major Bumiputera companies are promoting their products in the exposition divided into 11 sectors: agriculture and plantation, shipping and maritime, petrochemical, airport, airline, automotive and land transportation.

Others are express link development and power, education, financial services, property development and telecommunications.

Earlier, Dr Mahathir inspected a guard-of-honour comprising 500 Wanita Brigade members led by Mejar (Rtd) Habibah Baharum.

He later launched the brigade - a uniformed body in Wanita Umno formed to attract younger women to join the movement.

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