

18/08/2000

Malaysia has proven its ability to rule, says PM

Kamarul Yunus

SINCE achieving its independence 43 years ago, Malaysia has proven its ability to rule and develop the nation to the extent that it has become the most developed among the developing countries, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said.

He said this was no easy task, considering that Malaysia faced too many problems which could hinder or destroy the Government's efforts to ensure peace and prosperity.

"This was especially so because of the country's racial diversity.

"Usually in a country with various races, there would be tension, riots and even civil war.

"But thank God, Malaysians are wise enough to choose the administrative system and controlled their desires and were willing to share everything," he said at the launching of the Merdeka Month celebrations and the "Jalur Gemilang" campaign at Merdeka Square, Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

Due to the willingness of the multiracial community to share the country's wealth, Dr Mahathir said Malaysia has been able to avoid tension and ensure that there is peace and prosperity.

"Every race in the country have accepted to fact that there should be equal distribution of wealth among them and agreed to give priority to those who lags behind in terms of living standards," he said.

Dr Mahathir said this was the lesson that Malaysians learnt from the May 13 incident.

"The incident had taught us a lesson, from which we were able to formulate policies to address issues that had been left out.

"At the same time, the Government is looking at various steps to narrow the disparity between the various races," he said.

But, he said, this does not mean that the Government will take away the wealth of the successful and rich.

Instead, he said, the Government has expanded the nation's "economic cake" and distributed it to all quarters to ensure those left behind can get a bigger slice.

Dr Mahathir said this policy had helped Malaysia to recover speedily during the regional economic crisis.

"Not many countries which faced similar problems can develop as we did. That is why we should be proud of this achievement," he said.

Although 43 years is considered young and a short period of time, Dr Mahathir said the country has made unique progress.

For instance, he said Kuala Lumpur, which had a population of 300,000 in 1957, has expanded and there are now about 2 million people residing in the capital city.

"Malaysia's name is also known worldwide and the Malaysian flag, the Jalur Gemilang, had been planted on Mount Everest and had circled the world through the solo journey by Datuk Azhar Mansor on board his yacht," he said.

Dr Mahathir said many foreign leaders and tourists were impressed with how Malaysia managed and developed and want to emulate the country's success.

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