

PM credits ordinary folk for SUCCESSSES

STAR

24 FEB 2001

By JACK WONG
and DIANA ROSE

KUCHING: Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said although many people had credited him for the country's advancement it was "ordinary Malaysians" who had pushed the country forward.

The Prime Minister said these ordinary people had brought the country forward "faster than you and I had imagined."

He said they had helped to push his simple ideas into sophisticated and complex ones.

"For example, when I proposed to have an air show in Langkawi, which is meant really for small aircraft, we gave this job to a certain company and they turned it into a major airshow in the world," he said.

Similarly, when he suggested that a cycle race be held in Langkawi, the organisers promoted the Le Tour De Langkawi as a race covering Peninsular Malaysia, Sabah and Sarawak.

"Now it has become a major

world event in cycling," he said of the successful event last week.

Dr Mahathir was speaking at the opening of 1st Silicon's wafer fabrication plant at Sama Jaya Free Industrial Zone here on the first day of his two-day visit to Sarawak.

The Sarawak government has a majority stake in the US-\$1.7bil (RM6.46bil) plant, the first of its kind in the country.

"Most Malaysians are ambitious and they do not want to be left behind," the Prime Minister said, adding that Malaysians had always tried to do sophisticated things that normally were done in the developed countries.

He said the building of the KL International Airport as one of the biggest airports in the world was another example inspired by his suggestion to construct a new airport to replace the one at Subang which was getting congested.

Dr Mahathir said Sarawak had taken up an even bigger challenge when it decided to set up a wafer fabrication

plant to produce micro-chips.

He said his initial suggestion was to start a lower end hi-tech industry, like polishing wafers.

He said it was yet another example of the *Malaysia Boleh* spirit.

Dr Mahathir said a hightech industry of such nature was usually found in highly developed countries.

He said the whole new era of information technology had not only enabled the people to do all kinds of marvellous and miraculous things, at the press of a button, but also access information from all over the world.

He commended the Sarawak government for taking the lead in venturing into this field (wafer fabrication) with Sharp Corporation of Japan as

its main partner in technology and wafer supply.

Earlier, Chief Minister Tan Sri Haji Abdul Taib Mahmud said the wafer fab plant had enabled the state to participate in one of the world's most sophisticated industries.

He said it had attracted many skilled and talented Malaysians to return from overseas to serve the country.