

PM: M'sian

Malays

STAR 26.1.2001
as

capable

as others

JITRA: Malays in Malaysia are as capable as those in other countries, ~~Datuk Seri~~ Dr Mahathir Mohamad said yesterday.

The Prime Minister said Malays here held vital jobs such as generals, professors, pilots, lawyers and were also chief executive officers of multinational companies.

"We have an armed forces chief who is a Malay," he said, adding that there were many Malay pilots in the Royal Malaysia Air Force and commercial pilots handling 747 aircraft.

"There are also Malays who are chief executive officers of multinational companies based overseas.

"For example, Shell has appointed a Malay to take care of its operations in the Middle East and West Asia," he said.

"This shows that Malays are a capable people," he said when asked to comment on recent remarks by Singapore Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong that Malays in the republic were better off than Malaysian Malays.

"I don't wish to comment about Malays in Singapore. That's their country's problem. I don't want to make comparisons.

"Those are his (Goh's) com-

parisons. That's his business, I don't care, he can say whatever he likes," Dr Mahathir said.

Asked if such a statement could affect ties between the two countries, Dr Mahathir said: "Sometimes, they are good remarks and at other times bad. The relationship between the countries will always be like that, sometimes good and other times, bad.

"If it is bad, it will be improved to a good level but then it goes back to normal," he added.

In Kuala Lumpur, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said the Government had done its best to improve the lot of Malays in Malaysia.

"Opportunities created through development of our

country are for all races," he said, adding that no race in Malaysia was restricted from serving or holding posts in whatever service.

Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar said Goh's statement could be construed as meddling into Malaysia's affairs because it implied that the Government had failed to bring progress to Malays.

"Although we do not intend to overreact to such a statement, the comparison was uncalled for and can cause a strain in the relationship.

"This is something that both countries can do without, especially when we are trying to settle some long-standing issues and heal old wounds.

Umno Youth chief Datuk Hishammuddin Hussein said

Goh's statement was not made based on facts and figures.

"If Goh wants to make a comparison like that, then he should consider making research on the subject in toto.

"It should include the Malay population in Malaysia, which is around 13.5 million, against the 400,000-odd Singapore Malays, the number of Malaysian Malays holding equity in private companies, the per capita income and many other factors," he said.

Johor Mentri Besar Datuk Abdul Ghani Othman said Singapore was the second wealthiest nation in the world after Switzerland.

"With a population of about three million, it is only normal that its citizens live better lives," he said.