

03/07/2001

Country still needs Dr M's leadership

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JULY 1 this year marked the 20th anniversary of Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad as the Prime Minister of Malaysia.

Some critics may say that 20 years is a long time. However, time is relative if you measure Dr Mahathir's achievements and what he has done for Malaysia and its citizens.

Firstly, I believe that under his leadership, Malaysians have developed a certain pride of being Malaysian, of being Asian.

His support for excellence in sport, education, business and everything that we do speaks for itself.

His call to the Malays at the recent Umno general assembly to further develop themselves and to excel can clearly be applied to the other races as well.

Undoubtedly, when you speak about the achievements of Dr Mahathir, one cannot leave out Vision 2020, which is his vision of Malaysia becoming a fully developed country by the year 2020. His vision has not only become the vision of the Government, but it has also become the vision of Malaysians who have embraced it wholeheartedly.

Vision 2020 has been studied by many countries, and copied by some countries which also wish to move their nations and unite their citizens behind a common destiny.

As the saying goes, if you do not know where you're going, how are you going to get there?

The other major national achievement that I believe is attributable to Dr Mahathir is the creation of the Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC).

With the world moving ever so fast and getting smaller with the advent of the Internet and e-commerce, it is amazing to think that a person like Dr Mahathir is behind the MSC.

Dr Mahathir does not come from the 20-something to 30-something age group which make up the bulk of Malaysians who surf the Internet regularly, but he has so quickly understood the impact of technology on business and our daily lives so much so that he initiated the idea to earmark the area which we now call the MSC to be the testbed for the multimedia and the Internet industry.

Not only has he shown dynamism in nation-building and the new economy, but he has rejuvenated Umno time and time again, the recent being his role in orchestrating the setting up of Puteri Umno, which is led by Azalina Othman Said.

I believe that Umno's initiative to create Puteri Umno should be emulated by the other component parties of Barisan Nasional, if the circumstances are right, because the young women of Malaysia today are a latent force which can enhance the development and well-being of our country.

I attended the 10th World Economic Development Congress in Kuala Lumpur recently where Dr Mahathir gave a speech on globalisation.

While he was delivering his speech, I couldn't help but smile to myself at the liveliness of his speech, and the fact that he was not afraid to speak out against the evils of globalisation and the "unseen hands" that exploit globalisation for their own benefit.

After the speech, he had a dialogue session with the audience which was even more stimulating.

Thinking about it now, it seems remarkable that Dr Mahathir is 76 years

old and yet shows no signs of slowing down.

He looks healthy, is alert and is definitely working hard running the country for us.

A close friend of mine, who is a senior politician in the Government, once told me how he thought Dr Mahathir does it, that is, how he completes his gruelling daily schedule.

My friend's explanation was simple: "It is mind over matter."

I agree with this totally as age, like time, is relative. Some people who are in their forties and fifties consider themselves "old".

Strangely enough, some of my contemporaries who are in their thirties consider themselves "old". They refer to our days in school and college as "our time" or "during our days".

That strikes me as peculiar because from what I gather, a youth is a person who is in his/her thirties or below, and the word "youth" has its origins in the word "young".

When I am in my seventies, I can only hope to be half as active as Dr Mahathir. Furthermore, I view the life of Dr Mahathir as one of sacrifice.

Unfortunately, a lot of people do not realise that the leaders of our country, including Dr Mahathir, have sacrificed and are sacrificing a lot for the country and the citizens.

They only like to hear the critics who have their arguments against everything that the leaders do.

Malaysians have to realise that everything the leaders do cannot be solely out of self-interest.

If this were so, wouldn't they be voted out of their parties and/or voted out of their constituencies?

Dr Mahathir works as hard as any of us, if not harder, so why should he be "disqualified" from running the country just because he has been the Prime Minister for 20 years and is in his seventies?

Finally, I hope that Dr Mahathir can continue leading Malaysia for as long as he is able to, because we need this leader who is dynamic enough to ensure political stability and racial harmony in our country of diverse ethnicities.

Dr Mahathir is a visionary in the administration and development of this country and unafraid to stand up in the world arena to defend our country against individuals and entities who are bent on destroying our beloved nation.

Have a great 20th anniversary, Dr Mahathir.