

04/08/2001

PM praises civil service efficiency

Nelson Fernandez

KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today said Malaysia's efficient civil sector may have saved the country from economic ruin during the recent Asian financial crisis.

He said while certain Asean neighbours were still struggling to cope with the crisis and the US economy slowdown, Malaysia's economy was strong and resilient.

"We have succeeded so far because we have an administration that is efficient and civil servants who keep pledges made when they joined the civil service," he said at the presentation of the Finance Ministry's excellent service awards here.

Dr Mahathir said if not for the dedication and commitment of the government employees, Malaysia would have now been in a difficult position economically.

He said in some neighbouring countries, the crisis forced many government employees to accept bribes, so much so it had become a culture among their society.

The Prime Minister said when the situation became better and the employees earned three folds more, so did the amount of bribes.

"This clearly shows corruption was not due to insufficient salaries, but because it's a culture that should be shunned by society."

Dr Mahathir said although it could not be denied corruption existed in Malaysia, it was not rampant to the extent that it had become the norm.

He said there were two types of corruption - one where the transactions are done discreetly and the other out in the open.

"Thank God, in our country, we have not reached the second stage and with more effort and self realisation, we can eradicate this menace."

Dr Mahathir urged civil servants to understand the difficulties faced by the Government, especially when it cannot meet certain demands or requests.

He said the government must manage its finances prudently as failure to do so would result in the country having a high deficit account.

Dr Mahathir presented awards to 75 Ministry staff, 30 of whom received diagonal salary increments and 45, vertical increments.