

Zahir: Dr Mahathir a unique and

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MALACCA, Mon. Malaysia's rapid development in every field would not have been possible if it was not for Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's vision and capable leadership.

Describing Dr Mahathir as "a man with ambitions and a mind that could go beyond time and space", Dewan Rakyat Speaker Tun Zahir Ismail said this was evident from his numerous ideas.

"It is widely known that Dr Mahathir's ideas are always ahead of time. This made it difficult for others to follow suit," he said.

He said the Multimedia Super Corridor was one good example to show the uniqueness of his mind and forward-looking.

"His confidence was even shared by Microsoft Corporation chairman Bill Gates who even voiced his commitment to offer full investment to the MSC project," he said at the opening of the "A Colloquium on Dr Mahathir Mohamad's Thinkings" today.

Also present at the two-day colloquium organised by Institut Kajian Sejarah dan Patriotisme Malaysia were Chief Minister Datuk Seri Mohd Ali Rustam, State Legislative Assembly Speaker Datuk Amid Nordin, State Exco members and senior government officials.

Nine working papers touching on Dr Mahathir's thinkings on various issues pertaining to women, Islam, education, the Ma-

lays and Vision 2020 will be discussed during the colloquium.

Zahir said Dr Mahathir's Vision 2020 concept clearly showed his aspirations to have Malaysia transformed into a major industrial nation in the Asia-Pacific region.

He added that Dr Mahathir had always wanted the nation to prosper in terms of national unity, social justice, political stability, quality of life and self belief.

"He has always wanted all Malaysians to have their own identity in order to compete internationally," he added.

On the Malays, Zahir said most of Dr Mahathir's ideas were aimed at ensuring the development of the Malays and ensuring that

forward-looking leader

they have the potential to go further.

He said since becoming the Prime Minister 15 years ago, many success stories of the Malays could clearly be seen.

Citing the global economic downturn in the mid-1990s as an example, Zahir said Dr Mahathir's refusal to receive aid from the International Monetary Fund had helped the country.

National Economic Action Council executive director Datuk Mustapa Mohamed said Dr Mahathir's hands-on approach in managing the country's economy and his bravery in facing adversities, had helped transform Malaysia into an advanced developing

country.

"Since becoming the fourth Prime Minister, he has introduced various policies and the 1980s could be described as an era to diversify the country's economy.

"This was why we saw policies like the Look East Policy and Malaysia Inc which were directed at reducing the Government's burden and have the private sector play a role in the country's development," he added.

Mustapa said during the 1990s, Dr Mahathir played a major role in the construction of various projects including the Kuala Lumpur International Airport in Sepang, Kuala Lumpur City Centre and Putrajaya.

Mohd Ali said Dr Mahathir, by virtue of his unique thinking and planning, is a model of what a real statesman should be.

He said despite facing various challenges, both locally and internationally, Dr Mahathir stood for what he believed in and this was proven time and again.

"His different approach during the economic crisis in the 1990s helped steer Malaysian economy to a recovery when that of other countries virtually collapsed.

"Although the entire world accused him of employing a strategy considered irrelevant to modern times, he showed that his ideas were indeed good for the country."