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Dr M pays tribute to the people

Ramlan Said

KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. - Malaysia will continue to develop and remain peaceful as long as the people care for the country's well-being, the Prime Minister said tonight.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said he felt comforted as the new generation demonstrated a high level of moderation and tolerance, factors that have turned Malaysia into a peaceful and progressive nation, although multi-racial and multi-religious in composition.

"I salute the young generation. Vision 2020 is yours. You will see to it that we become a developed nation by 2020 and you will enjoy a better life than what we have experienced."

Dr Mahathir said Malaysians should be grateful to the country's past leaders for laying the foundation of close co-operation among the people.

It was due to their wisdom that the country was peaceful and harmonious, he added.

He said although many told him that Malaysia was already a developed nation, the country could not afford to be complacent.

He was speaking at a gathering "One Nation, We Care - An Evening with the Prime Minister" at the National Stadium in Bukit Jalil tonight.

The event, themed "Our Vision For Tomorrow in Nation Building", saw over 60,000 people coming together to celebrate being Malaysian.

The evening with Dr Mahathir showcased a music and dance extravaganza featuring top local recording artistes, cultural dances and tattoo marches.

"There are still many areas that need attention. We want to see the whole nation from Perlis to Sabah attain the same level of development.

"I am confident that with the caring attitude shown by Malaysians, no area will be left behind," Dr Mahathir said.

He said tonight's gathering was special as it was mooted, organised and attended by ordinary Malaysians of all races.

"Syabas to all of you because you care for the nation. We gather here tonight to show our love for the country.

"Here, all races can gather without worries, unlike in some other countries. This is unique to us," he said.

On the support for his leadership, he said he was touched by it, adding that 21 years of achievement would not have been possible without the people's support.

What was important, said the Prime Minister, was to adopt the right attitude and policies.

"Malaysia subscribes to sharing the economy and political cake as it is wiser to strive and partake a portion of a growing cake rather than doing something that would make it shrink," he said.

Earlier, the arrival of Dr Mahathir and wife Datuk Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali was greeted with thunderous applause from the crowd, some in their seats as early as 6pm.

He was then introduced to representatives of three associations which sponsored the event - the Life Insurance Association of Malaysia, the General Insurance Association of Malaysia and the National Association of Malaysia Life Insurance and Financial Advisors.