

'Baton change' coming on smoothly

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HOW is the transition, for the transfer of leading the management of Malaysian economy, from Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad to Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, going so far?

I believe that most Malaysians would reply: Impressive, so far so good!

Dr Mahathir's unprecedented 22-year premiership, has changed Malaysia from a poor agricultural country to an advanced developing country, significantly raised our living standards, and built a country that is respected internationally.

But steady and sustained socio-economic development is a long and strenuous process which most developing countries have failed to achieve.

Malaysia has by comparison succeeded enormously — but obviously there is much more to be done.

It is often conveniently forgotten that the industrial countries took hundreds of years to become developed. They also had the advantage of being able to exploit the rich resources of their colonies or forcibly occupied native lands, to reach their present advanced state of development.

We need more time to become an industrialised country.

ECONOMY

By Ramon Navaratnam

Thus the Government's recent changes in its education policy, like the teaching of Maths and Science in English and the introduction of the mother tongues such as Chinese and Tamil in national schools, will go a long way to increase the multiracial composition in the national schools.

Already the recent survey undertaken by the Chinese education movement Dong Zong, indicates that the enrolment in the 60 independent Chinese schools has dropped by 4.3 per cent to 9,724 from 10,168 in Junior Middle 1 (or the equivalent of Form 1) in 2003, according to the *Sin Chew Daily*.

This is a welcome development, as it shows that the Government's new education policies are contributing towards the building of national unity.

It is possible that similar developments are taking place in the Tamil schools. But this has to be confirmed by similar surveys.

However, the Government will have to ensure that these vernacular

cans who have become extremely unilateral after the Sept 11 attack on the US.

In a multipolar world, Third World countries had far better prospects to succeed economically.

Thus we need to get closer to the Russians as they have shed their big power and domineering attitudes and are more empathetic to the aspirations of the developing world.

Similar logic applies to our economic relations with Europe, and especially with France and Germany

Abdullah, the Prime Minister after October 2003, made some important policy pronouncements in Tokyo on July 10.

He announced that he is prepared to work closely with Japan that had supported the US-led coalition's unilateral war against Iraq.

Does this mean that he will have fewer problems working closely with the US?

Indeed, Malaysia would need to improve relations with the United States, but it may be difficult. However, we should continue, together with the rest of the world, to urge the US and the UK to reject their unilateralism and hegemonic policies.

The unproductive Singapore water spats should also be settled quickly. If meaningful negotiations won't work, then please go to arbitration soon.