

Dr M: Vision 2020 within our reach

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PUTRAJAYA, Wed. — Malaysia's hope of achieving a developed nation status by 2020 is still very much within reach, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

The Prime Minister said although Malaysia had been independent for only 46 years, the nation had managed to reach a level of development envied by many.

"Forty-six years is not a very long period. It doesn't matter if you are a Malay, Chinese, Indian, Iban, Kadazan or of any other race, it is our responsibility to ensure that peace reigns in our country ...because this is where we live.

"I'm confident that our country will continue to grow and become a developed nation by the year 2020. We can achieve Vision 2020," Dr Mahathir told more than 2,000 people who had gathered at the Prime Minister's office here to thank the Prime Minister for his services to the nation, in conjunction with the 46th Merdeka Day celebrations.

The group included pre-schoolers, student bodies from various parts of the country, religious organisations, non-governmental organisations, private companies and members of the Putrajaya police corps.

Also present were Malaysia's mariner Datuk Azhar Mansor, English Channel swimmer Abdul Malik

Mydin, national bowler Shalin Zulkifli, Royal shoe designer Datuk Jimmy Choo and former national bodybuilder Malek Noor.

A downpour minutes before Dr Mahathir's arrival at the Prime Minister's Office complex did not deter the thousands of Malaysians.

They expressed their love and affection for Dr Mahathir and Datuk Seri Dr Siti Hasmah by singing *Jalur Gemilang* and waving the national flag.

Dr Mahathir advised Malaysians to avoid being associated with any form of violence or terror activities, as these would drag the country towards anarchy.

"We are peaceful now, there is no need for any Malaysian to resort to violence.

"Whatever we want to do, we do it democratically with the approval of the people. We don't kill each other, as in other places around the world.

"We use the democratic process to institute changes. We can hold discussions to solve whatever problems or differences that we may have ...but not through violence."

Dr Mahathir also drew the crowd's attention to the recent road accident near Serendah, which ~~claimed 12~~ lives.

Urging the people to be more considerate and careful while driving, Dr Mahathir said that it was sad to note that more Malaysians died in road accidents each year than from ill-

nesses.

On the 46th Merdeka Day celebrations to be held for the first time in Putrajaya, Dr Mahathir said Malaysians should turn out in full force to ensure the celebration is a historic event.

"This is the first time we will be celebrating Merdeka Day in Putrajaya. Ten years or a hundred years down the road you can be proud to say you were here during the historic celebration.

"Come to Putrajaya and see for yourself the beauty of our new administrative capital. We want Malaysians to be proud of our achievements, we too can have beautiful buildings.

"This is for all Malaysians. As for me, I'm happy that before I retire I can at least enjoy the Merdeka Day celebrations here once ...as the Prime Minister of Malaysia.

"Next year there will be a different Prime Minister," he said to a thunderous applause and cries of "Long Live Dr Mahathir and Dr Siti Hasmah".

Towards the end of the gathering, a group of pre-schoolers from the Mawar Murni kindergarten rendered the *Jalur Gemilang* for Dr Mahathir and Dr Siti Hasmah.

The Prime Minister, who was touched by the spirit of patriotism shown by the young, joined them and acted as their conductor for the song.