

07/01/2003

PM: 4pc growth was likely last year

Annie Freeda Cruetz

KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. - Malaysia is believed to have achieved a four per cent economic growth last year despite 2002 being a challenging one for many nations, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

However, he added it did not succeed in achieving all the development it had targeted for the year.

Dr Mahathir attributed the success achieved to the ability, dedication and efficiency of civil servants who had diligently implemented Government policies.

"I must thank the administrators and civil servants for their good work and cooperation," he said at the opening of the National Institute of Public Administration Management Technology Centre (Imatec) here.

Dr Mahathir, however, expressed regret that there was still a certain degree of corruption among some civil servants although it was minimal.

But he said corruption needed to be totally eradicated.

"Cases of corruption that have been brought to my attention have been looked into and dealt with," he said.

Dr Mahathir said corruption could be divided into two categories namely, under the table and on the table.

"As far as Malaysia is concerned, the corrupt practices are done under the table and this is preventable. If it is done openly as seen in some countries, then it is serious," he said.

He said corruption was not accepted by the Malaysian society and that was why it was minimal.

Dr Mahathir said countries with a "corruption culture" in its government administration would not see growth and development although they may be rich nations blessed with abundant resources.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia was blessed with many good and uncorrupted top officials who fear God and abide by the laws of the country.

"Our success is also attributed to the stability of the Government, peace and harmony.

"Malaysians have helped in the nation growing steadily to what it is today.

"It is because of this we have advanced rapidly in the use of sophisticated technologies, our business and industrial sectors have grown and there is a boost in the tourism industry."

Dr Mahathir also attributed the four per cent economic growth the country is believed to have achieved to Malaysians refraining from demonstrations, strikes and other activities that would have hampered the progress of the nation.

Dr Mahathir said if Malaysians made more money, then the Government too would make money and increase the size of the Government coffers.

"Civil servants can also see a pay rise commensurating fairly with their performance," he added.

He said civil servants in Malaysia were paid fairly high compared to many countries but "of course we can do with more".

However, he said he did not believe in paying Government servants very high salaries which would lead to inflation and increase in prices of goods.

"What is the point of having high salaries when you cannot buy much with the money, especially when the prices of goods are also high.

"It's better to have a lower salary and have a good purchasing power

like in Malaysia."

The prices of some goods in Malaysia were controlled and that was why people could afford to buy things with their salaries and still save.