

Venezuelan President praises Dr Mahathir

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CARACAS, Thurs. — Venezuelan President Carlos Andres Perez last night described Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad as one of Asia's contemporary leaders who has succeeded in turning an essentially developing Third World country into a modern and advanced nation.

President Perez had been to Malaysia twice, first as a member of the South Commission a few years ago and then to attend the Group of 15 (G-15) summit in Kuala Lumpur in June.

He said that on the first occasion, he was genuinely surprised over what he saw

in the country.

"I must confess that before the visit, I thought, and I believe most Venezuelans share my view, that Malaysia was still a backward country," he said in an impromptu speech at

a ceremony during which the two leaders exchanged decorations at the Presi-

dential Palace La Casona here.

President Perez said: "During my second visit, I became envious over the manner by which you have been able to steer your country into progress."

"The success of your land development programme, industrialisation and other

activities is something which countries of the Third World including ourselves can emulate," he added.

President Perez said that it was after the first visit that he began telling his colleagues in the Cabinet and outside that South-South co-operation could really work. — Bernama