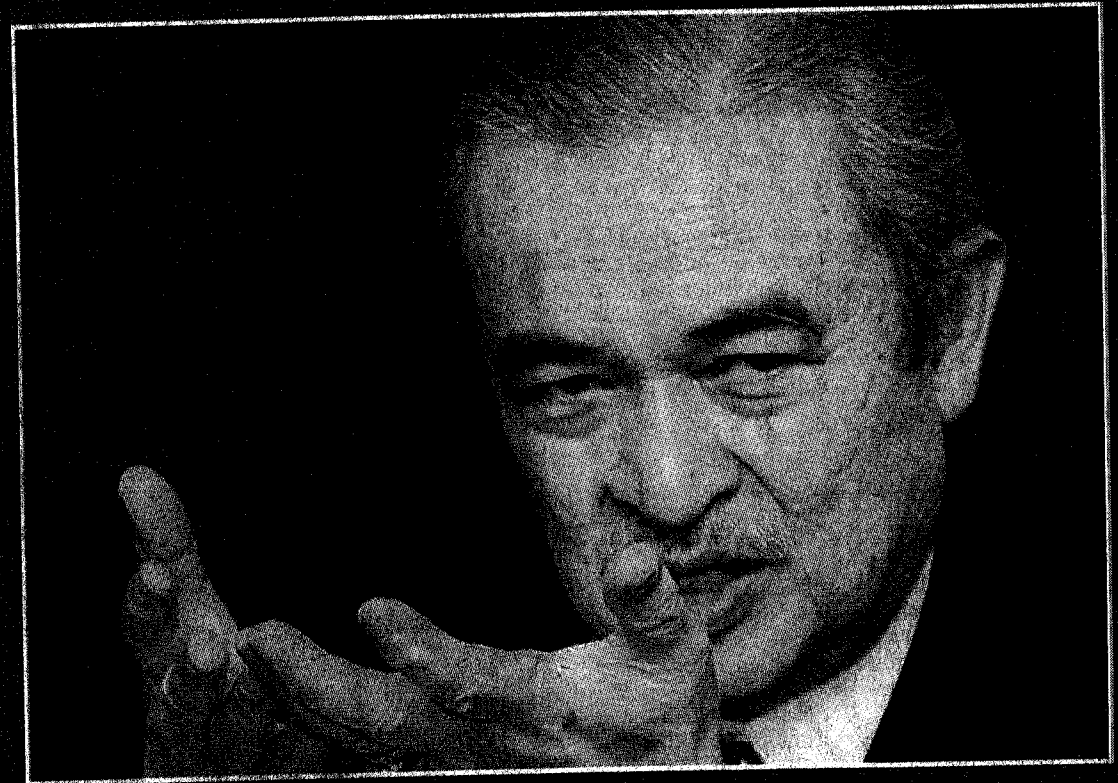


Unleash your potential

Let all citizens of Malaysia, without feeling inferior, without feeling sidelined, irrespective of race or religion, rise to become statesmen in our own land. We're equal, we're all Malaysians. No individual in this country is more Malaysian than another. Unleash your potential and shape this country of yours the way you want it to be.'

The Prime Minister's Merdeka Day message to all Malaysians



■ **By Abdullah Ahmad Badawi**
Prime Minister of Malaysia

SEVENTY-FIVE per cent of our people today were born after Aug 31, 1957. It is impossible for them to imagine how bitter and hard a conquered people's life is.

In the 47 independent years, our peoples' lives have improved dramatically. The physical development has been astounding as well.

But think. Would we be proud of our achievements if it was the Union Jack flying high and not the Jalur Gemilang? No, I think

we would feel different.

We are proud to be Malaysian today because it is through our sweat and toil that we succeeded.

Independence symbolises our freedom; it symbolises our sovereignty; our strength and success.

There may be times when we are unhappy or disappointed.

But we have never been divided in our love for our Malaysia. We are proud to be Malaysian.

Malaysia belongs to us. It is we who will

determine whether we succeed or whether we fail.

Only we must determine what shape and direction this country takes; not anyone else.

Our country was built on the blood of our warriors, our armed forces, our security forces, who kept this country safe from our enemies.

Tunku Abdul Rahman fought for independence; Tun Abdul Razak brought development; Tun Hussein Onn fought to forge unity; Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad went against the tide to modernise our country.

As leaders, together with our people, they brought us to where we are today.

Maybe we should ask ourselves: Have we done our duty as citizens to make Malaysia a country we can be proud of? If we have not, what are we waiting for? If we have, have we done enough?

This country needs the contribution of every citizen. Everyone has a role. Undertake your responsibilities with honesty, efficiency and integrity. We have to constantly do our best.

Let all citizens of Malaysia, without feeling inferior, without feeling sidelined, irrespective

of race or religion, rise to become statesmen in our own land. We are equal, we are all Malaysians. No individual in this country is more Malaysian than another.

If we all unleash our full potential, share our ideas, we can go so much further. Imagine, imagine what Malaysia can achieve if we all put our full potential at its disposal.

Malaysians can be a people of distinction, of glory and of excellence, united irrespective of race or religion, overcoming all obstacles and hurdles in our path, for the sake of our country, for the sake of our future.