

Dr M: A leader must have discipline

KUALA LUMPUR: A political leader needs to be disciplined and willing to set aside his personal interests in his bid to develop his country, said former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

"In thinking, you need to be quite disciplined because disciplined thinking is likely to produce the desired results."

Dr Mahathir said this in his keynote address titled "Asian Political Leadership: Disciplined Thinking For Change" at the 14th International Conference on Thinking (ICOT) 2009 at the Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre yesterday.

The five-day conference, which began on Monday, is attended by about 500 participants from 42 countries, including Malaysia.

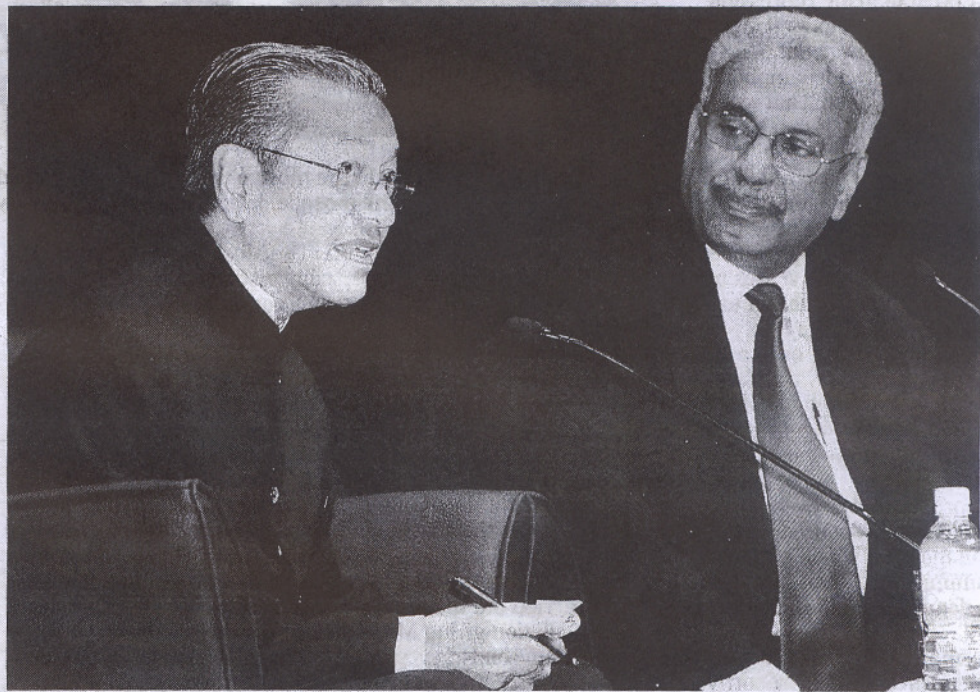
Dr Mahathir also said the ability of Malaysia to face the economic crisis in 1997 was due to the disciplined thinking process conducted by the government then.

It was able to produce a device to save the country from the economic crisis, unlike those who accepted the alternative solution offered by the world monetary fund body, he said.

Dr Mahathir said it was good "to be a little bit suspicious with the solution offered by others".

He said the decisions of political leaders also played an important role, especially in determining whether the country progressed or regressed.

"A good example can be seen in the modern and very developed Japan after its polit-



Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad answering a question from a conference participant. With him is Prof Datuk Dr Sheikh Omar Rahman of Universiti Putra Malaysia. — Bernama picture

ical leaders decided to emulate the European countries. This also goes for China, how under Deng Xiao Ping the country had moved towards modernisation.

"Now China is the world's major manufacturing country and they can even produce almost everything. Although some say the products are of low quality, I believe they can be improved eventually."

However, Dr Mahathir cautioned that once a person was in power, it would be difficult to remove him even though he was not a good leader and had brought damage to his country.

"Under the democratic system, one has to wait until the next election to remove or change the bad leader and in the meantime, the people in the country will suffer."

Dr Mahathir said the leadership quality required in Asian countries differed from that in Europe due to the difference in culture.

"In Europe, their ideas are almost identical and their situations allow them to copy each other, but it is different with Asian countries where their value systems and culture differ. As a result, the development in Asia has not been uni-

form," he said.

To a question from the floor on the teaching of Science and Mathematics in English, Dr Mahathir said Malaysians had to learn the language of knowledge in order to have access to the latest discoveries or theories in science and technology, which used English as its main language.

"Although we learn best in our native languages, we cannot expect other people to continue or always be there to translate the information or findings in other languages solely for our benefit." — Bernama