

Wed, Sept 2, 2009 - PETALING JAYA: Malaysia's future development and economic competitiveness will require greater political maturity from its people.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak said Malaysians often resorted to using harsh words instead of rational debate.

Too often, we turn to hasty rhetoric and harsh words instead of reasoned debate.

We face a world of immense differences and challenges. To overcome them, we should seek out the strength of our forefathers and the spirit that drove them towards independence.

Theirs was a spirit that sought a better future for their children and the generations to follow. The way they achieved this was by working together in unison,

Najib said in his 1Malaysia blog in reply to several questions posed by the public in conjunction with the 52nd Merdeka Day.

The Prime Minister said Malaysia had managed to thrive as a nation precisely because of the people's ability to build on their diversity.

Najib said although 52 years of independence was not a long time, it was remarkable that Malaysia had achieved so much in that space of time, pointing out that the country had shifted from an agriculture-based economy to that capable of exporting products worldwide.

In 1957, over half of our population lived below the poverty line. Today, it is less than 4%. We have come a long way.

Yet, we still have to remain focused on the journey ahead,

he added.

Asked on the challenges in getting the 1Malaysia message across, Najib said one of its goals was to stimulate open and honest discussions but warned that there was no quick way of reaching mutual understanding and

no fast fix for issues that still tried to divide Malaysians.

The key is to keep talking to one another and work together to resolve them. That is what 1Malaysia stands for,

he said.

On past memories of Merdeka celebrations, Najib said he remembered how guests used to file in to visit his father

the second prime minister Tun Abdul Razak Hussein

in the days leading to Merdeka Day.

You must remember that I was born just four years before Independence.

Our country was still young and growing when I reached my most formative years.