

to nationhood. Malaysia is arguably one of the few countries where the existence of immigrant races have not resulted in their dominance as has been the case in many other countries. The process to achieve this has not been without setbacks but we can be relatively assured that going in to the next century, our foundations are strong for the challenges ahead.

Mr. President,

6. In Peninsular Malaysia, there are about 83,000 indigenous people belonging to 3 major groups and 18 sub-groups who are still practising their traditional modes of life. The interests and rights of the people as citizens and as a group with special needs are protected by the constitution and by the Aboriginal Peoples Act, 1954. With the help of the government of Malaysia, through the Department of Aborigines Affairs, most of these people have been resettled into 779 settlements where they could be reached easily to receive basic health, social, educational and other services. Since these settlements are most of the times at the fringe or concentrated in the middle of the jungle these people are not really removed from their natural environment. In fact, most of them still practise their traditional skills as hunters and gatherers for additional income.

7. The Malaysian government has developed a comprehensive plan and strategy to assist the aborigines which include education, training in commerce and industry, providing medical services, improving educational skills and development facilities. Currently more than 14,000 aborigines children are in school while many families have on their own accord decided to switch their hunting/gathering and slash and burn cultivation way of life to organised farming and animal husbandry in government sponsored land