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KUALA LUMPUR.
Sat. — The Government should lay greater stress on explaining its reasons for adopting Malay as the national language in the interest of national unity.

A former Umno leader, Dr. Mahathir bin Mohamed, said this yesterday. He was speaking to members of the University of Malaya Graduates' Society on National Unity—Myth or Reality.

He said too much feeling had been aroused against Malay as the national language. Some of the non-Malays felt this was being done because the Malay language belonged to the Malays.

It should instead be pointed out that it was the most practical language in the context of the nation's needs.

From all practical aspects, Malay was the language most suited for adoption by all Malaysians.

The English language had never been a national language here. It had been spoken by only a few Malays who were lucky enough to get into the civil service, a few Chinese who went to English medium schools, and the few Indians who became professionals.

"English never penetrated the kampongs or a vast proportion of the Chinese and Indian communities."

Chinese or the Indian languages could not be used as the national language because both were diverse—there were several Chinese and Indian dialects and they were spoken by relatively very few.

'Vital factor

Malay, on the other hand, was spoken even by a Tamil when talking to a Punjabi. It had been spoken by a strong community of Malacca Chinese before the British arrived on the scene and English took over as a prestige language.

Malay was most widely used, in day-to-day life, in the commercial sector. It had even been adopted by the Indonesians as their national language.

Dr. Mahathir said that a common language was an essential factor in the creation of national unity.

Malaysia was not a nation born out of a sense of oneness, of things in common, between people of various races.

Malaysia was, rather, a nation created to facilitate administration, to create boundaries.

Now the problem was to create national unity, which was the very basis of a nation's survival.

At present, there was no feeling of oneness among the people, and for the moment, national unity was but a myth.

National unity could be created by giving the people a common language

and common culture.

Malay as the national language would have a very deep impact on Malaysia's culture, making it Malay-based but with Indian and Chinese cultural influences being very dominant.

For the successful creation of national unity, it was necessary that the non-Malays accept this fact.

This was no attempt to make one race dominant, but a very real attempt to unify the various peoples and give them a national identity and solidarity.

A barrier

The principles of the Rukunegara were not as good a basis to work on in building up national unity, said Dr. Mahathir.

The principles were lofty and of tremendous worth in themselves, but certain sections of the community looked on the Rukunegara as an essentially Malay idea, and this had built up a barrier against its successful impact.

It could be very effective for the next generation if the teachers of the next generation dedicated themselves in all genuineness to imparting its principles to their pupils.

Dr. Mahathir said he had been alleged to be a strong racialist by many people.

But he had done much for the Chinese — out of 10 scholarships given to students out of his own pocket in his father's name, nine of these had gone to Chinese.

He had found employment for many non-Malays, signed letters of guarantee for many of them who went overseas, and recommended many for further studies abroad.