

YOUR RIGHT — WITHIN LIMITS

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TOWARDS A NEW MALAY WORLD: 4

MALACCA, Sat — Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad reassured the various communities today that they have the right to practise their own cultures — within limits.

And he warned politicians against making culture a political issue. To do so would only benefit certain groups who were anti-unity and whose loyalty was still questionable, he said.

The communities' cultures was one thing, he said at the opening of the Meeting of the Malay World '82 here, but the basis of national culture were three principles adopted at the first national cultural congress more than 10 years ago. Those principles still

held good, he said.

The three principles are that:

- The national culture be based on the indigenous culture;

- Elements of other cultures which are suitable and appropriate could be accepted into the national culture; and

- Islam should be an important element.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir added, however, that in the creation of a national culture, every person had the "freedom to practise his own culture as ethnic culture within certain limits and framework. This is

guaranteed in the Federal Constitution.

And he reminded Malaysians that the creation of a national culture was linked directly to national unity.

PREPARATION

He said that in the preparation for independence, a few basic matters were agreed on as the basis for the building of a new nation and nationality.

"We had all agreed that national unity and solidarity would be achieved through one language, the national language, and one

culture, the national culture," he said.

"Thus, the national language is based on the Malay language and the national culture on the culture of the indigenous people."

The Prime Minister said the three principles which are the basis for the national culture is "actually something that has been going on for hundreds of years."

The difference between then and now, he added, is that the cultural development at that time took place without any planning. This led to the assimilation of some things which were undesirable to the creation

of a strong nationality truly loyal to the country.

Datuk Dr Mahathir stressed that discussions on culture should be free of political prejudice. The national culture issue, he added, should not arise again just as the national language issue no longer arises.

The issue now, he said, was "our effort and responsibility towards practising this concept for the sake of living together in peace."

"If we truly want a peaceful nation where the people live happily, language and culture should not be political issues as this could only benefit certain anti-unity groups whose loyalty is still questionable."