

# RIGHTS OF MINORITIES PROTECTED, SAYS DR M

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KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. — Prime Minister (Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad) stressed tonight that there was no oppression of minorities in the country and neither were these minorities prevented from practising their own cultures and way of life.

"Unlike certain countries where the people in the minority are oppressed and are not allowed to practise their way of life and culture, this does not happen in Malaysia.

"In fact, the people of various races and beliefs have the freedom and guarantee to continue with their way of life protected by the Constitution," he said.

The Prime Minister was speaking at the prize giving ceremony for a Bahasa Malaysia elocution contest for national-type Chinese primary schools.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir urged the people not to take the peace and security enjoyed by the nation for granted.

He said that in a multi-racial country like Malaysia where each community held particular sentiments, the question of peace and security was very important.

He said that the May 13 incident showed how easily the peace could be shattered by irresponsible elements who stirred up racial sentiments.

He pointed out that human beings, however, were never satisfied and "take for granted" the benefits enjoyed by them. "Human beings are always greedy and when they are comfortable, they demand this and that without taking into account the negative effects which can make the existing comforts disappear," he said.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir stressed that awareness of the question of peace and security must be cultivated among the people, especially the children.

"If we sow suspicions in their hearts about not being able to live together in harmony, we would be damaging the basis of their unity," he said.

He pointed out that the country's education system allowed opportunities for the different communities to learn their own mother tongues.

"At the same time, as a sovereign nation, we have a national language, Bahasa Malaysia, which is the symbol and tool of unity.

"This has been accepted and, after a quarter-of-a-century of independence, the generations of the various races have mastered Bahasa Malaysia well," he said.

He expressed his satisfaction at the fluency of non-Malays in the language and added: "Some of them even speak it better than the Malays.

"In fact, there are factors which show that the Malays themselves must improve their capability in Bahasa Malaysia."

He said the question now was that some non-Malays go through primary national-type schools where, possibly, Bahasa Malaysia received less attention.

He pointed out that while this could help students master their own mother tongues, in the national context their capability in Bahasa Malaysia should not be neglected.

The Prime Minister stressed that the question of language should not be tied to racial sentiments.

"We must hold fast to the stand that modern Malay-

sians should not only master Bahasa Malaysia but if able, should master many other languages.

"As such, we must prepare our thinking and the thinking of future generations about the importance of language from the aspect of national identity and from the aspect of ourselves as members of the international community," he said.

He called on the people to face all challenges with a positive attitude. "With the progress being achieved now, the new generation needs to increase its capabilities to receive various types of knowledge.

"If we are only concerned with sentiments, we will be rich in sentiments but lose out in terms of knowledge..." Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said.

The Prime Minister also stressed that there was no alternative for the people but to accept that they had to live together and "decide our destiny together."

"Similarly, we have to accept that no one person, let alone a community or group, can fulfil everyone of his aspirations.

"It is not quite accurate if any one quarter feels that another quarter has fulfilled all its aspirations completely.

"There is no such thing as absolute justice or absolute equality in this world. What is present are efforts to improve a situation and we must work to improve the situation from time to time.

"The primary consideration is that the interests of the majority be looked after while taking into account aspects which are important to the minority. This is the basis of democracy," Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said.