

PM: No place for narrow parochial interests

National unity

comes first

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By JAMES RITCHIE

LUBUK ANTU, Wed. — The Prime Minister today urged the people not to allow small issues involving communal interests to divert their attention from working towards unity in the country.

He said all communities should instead strive towards national objectives and the continued prosperity of the nation.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad warned the people against those who would exploit communal interests to drive a wedge between the various communities.

"The unity and progress of the nation should not be relegated to second place by narrow parochial interests," he said when opening a Barisan Nasional Youth work camp.

He warned the rakyat to be on guard against political opponents of the Barisan Nasional who are using "anger and hate".

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The prime objective of these opposition parties was to confuse the people in order to divide them.

"They are only thinking of themselves while bringing about feelings of anger and hate. They want to divide the people so that they can be in control," he said.

He said that "forces" outside the Barisan Nasional had deliberately brought out small issues, some pertaining to religion, to divide the community.

They even went to the extent of saying that the various communities in Malaysia should not work together as it was against a particular religion. "We must put aside small issues and think of more important things like national development."

Dr Mahathir said national solidarity could not be achieved unless the rakyat was willing to sacrifice for the sake of the nation.

He said the concept of the Barisan Nasional was clear in its theme of "Unity in diversity" and Malaysia could be proud of achieving this in a multi-com-

munal nation.

There was, however, a need to sustain this unity and not allow parochialism or narrow-minded concepts to get the better of us.

Dr Mahathir said in a multi-racial country like Malaysia which has achieved stability, no one community should impose itself upon other communities.

In Malaysia, there is freedom of the usage of the various languages and freedom of religious practices which cannot be said for many countries with a multi-communal background.

He said that like the older generation of Chinese who had arrived in Malaysia as penniless labourers and had built their own fortune, there were the ungrateful sons who squandered the wealth accumulated through hard work, sometimes causing the break up of the family.

In this context, Malaysians of the post-independence generation must not forget the generation which fought for independence, toiling and sacrificing in sweat and tears.

It was essential that the present generation understood the values of the pioneers and their spirit which brought about independence.