

Dr M: DON'T LET OTHERS QUESTION YOUR LOYALTY

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PRIME MINISTER Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad urged Malaysians of all races not to act in a manner that will cast doubts on their loyalty to the country.

He told the House that such activities, if allowed, would only divide the nation. He was replying to a supplementary question by Mr Lim Kit Siang (DAP - Kota Melaka) who asked whether the Government plans to upgrade its relationship with China on a people-to-people basis.

Mr Lim also wanted to know whether it was true that the Government did not want to establish such a relationship because it doubted the loyalty of the Malaysian Chinese.

Dr Mahathir said the loyalty of Malaysians should never be questioned by anybody in the first place.

But he pointed out that at times, the activities of certain groups of people had cast suspicions on their loyalty.

For instance, he noted that whenever there was a sports competition between China and Malaysia, certain section of the Chinese community would cheer the Chinese team.

"But we cannot blame China for this. We should blame our own people for behaving in a manner that puts their loyalty in question," he said.

The Prime Minister stressed that if any race, not necessarily the Chinese, behaved and acted as if their loyalty was to a foreign country, then one could not help but harbour suspicion about their allegiance.

He also said that people-to-people relationship was

kar Rautin Ibrahim (BN - Kuala Kedah) that the Chinese Government still recognised the existence of the banned Communist Party of Malaya (CPM) although it did not support it directly.

"But we, on our part, have conveyed our stand that it is better for the Chinese Government not to recognise the CPM at all," he said, adding that the two Governments did not budge on the issue.

However, he said, he did not want to pursue the matter further because his nine-day visit to China was mainly a trade mission.

To another question by Wan Abu Bakar Wan Mohamed (BN - Jerantut), he said China had agreed that there should be direct trading between the two countries.

But, he said, this would take time because China was not sure about the ability of Malaysian businessmen.

Dr Mahathir said that before diplomatic relations were established, China had been trading with Malaysia for years through third countries like Singapore and Hong Kong.

As such, he said, China had developed close commercial links with these countries and has been treating them like old friends whom they know they can trust.

But in the case of Malaysia, China was dealing with new partners and so it would take time for the Chinese to establish similar close business rapport.

To another question, Dr Mahathir said that for Malaysia to redress its trade imbalance with China, it had to step up its exports to the republic.