

Mahathir: Think NST 18 SEP 1987 Malaysian

By JAMES RITCHIE

KUCHING, Thurs. Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad called on the people today to discard "narrow parochial attitudes" and be proud of their Malaysian identity.

They should think of themselves as Malaysians, not as citizens of their respective States.

"If we do not have this kind of feeling towards our nation, our spirit of nationalism will be weakened," he warned.

"And we will be left with a nation with narrow parochial interests," he said at a Barisan Nasional Youth Solidarity Day gathering at the Dewan Santapan in Petra Jaya, here.

"Even though we are a nation of many races, even though we are separated by sea between the peninsula and Sabah and Sarawak, we have achieved solidarity," he said.

He said that it was through solidarity and unity of all the races that the nation was able to secure its independence.

Dr Mahathir said that before Independence, various States in Peninsular Malaysia, Sarawak and Sabah were victims of the British system of divide-and-rule.

"It reached a stage when some people thought that we were citizens of Kedah, Perak, Sarawak or British North Borneo. This divide-and-rule system enabled the British to

strengthen their position because we were divided and because we were only loyal to our small and weak States."

Dr Mahathir said youths must carry on with the responsibility of ensuring that the nation's solidarity was not disrupted.

Present at the gathering of more than 2,000 Barisan Nasional Youth leaders from throughout the country were Sarawak Chief Minister Datuk Patinggi Haji Abdul Taib Mahmud, Barisan Nasional Youth leader Datuk Seri Najib Tun Abdul Razak, Sarawak Barisan Tiga (excluding Parti Bansa Dayak Sarawak) Youth leader Datuk Celestine Ujang, their wives and State Ministers.

Datuk Seri Najib, in his speech, said the youths should not be blind to the struggles and sacrifices of past leaders who fought for the country's independence, and the nation-building efforts of present leaders.

He also criticised the attitude of certain people who had doubts over the country's future.

These people claimed they were "third-class citizens" because of restrictions on them. At the same time, they admit having more freedom than people in some other countries, he said.

Datuk Najib, who is Youth and Sports Minister, challenged such groups to "build the country of their dream outside Malaysia."