

THE INTEREST OF MAJORITY COMES FIRST: PM

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FREEDOM and democracy in Malaysia should take into consideration the interest of the people who make up the silent majority, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said.

The Prime Minister said the interest of the silent majority must be taken into account so that they were not bullied by the activist minority.

"The people have accepted that in this country democracy has reasonable limits that protect the interest of the majority yet do not hinder the views and opinions of minor groups that work according to democratic principles," he added.

Dr Mahathir said the majority of Malaysians would not allow individuals and the minority groups to dictate their lives.

"In a democratic country like ours, we practise freedom that reaps benefits for everybody. We cannot accept the kind of freedom in certain advanced countries which victimise the people through irresponsible acts in the name of freedom," he said.

"Therefore, the freedom that any individual or group advocates better not threaten the peace of the community," the Barisan Nasional chairman said at the opening of the 35th MCA general assembly in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

Dr Mahathir said in a country with a plural society "sensitive" issues need to be resolved through diplomatic means and with sincerity so that the issues were not used as tools to cause problems to the people.

For this reason, he added, the Barisan preferred to discuss such issues courteously behind closed doors to seek solutions that were impartial but acceptable by the majority of those involved.

"The Barisan also gives due importance to consensus of opinion. Here the

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PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad yesterday praised Datuk Dr Ling Liong Sik for delivering his policy address in Bahasa Malaysia at the opening of the MCA general assembly.

It was the first time an MCA president delivered his entire speech in the national language at a party general assembly.

The Barisan Nasional chairman said Dr Ling had been very fluent in Bahasa Malaysia and this was a good sign not only for Barisan co-operation but also national harmony.

"Bahasa Malaysia is not a language for only the Malays but a national language that should be learnt by all the people," Dr Mahathir said when beginning his speech opening the general assembly.

majority system cannot be used because the representation in the Barisan is not in proportion of the parties or communal groups that make up its membership," he said.

"As in a large family, there are sometimes differences of opinions among the component parties. This is normal. Such differences of opinions, however, should not cause any rift in the Barisan. Rather, if we are patient and strive to find a solution through a spirit of give and take, we will achieve a mature decision," he added.

Dr Mahathir said that although one or two parties would, once in a while, get carried away by their emotions, the Barisan could be proud that good sense usually prevailed to resolve the problems at hand.

He said the country would continue to see development if there was political stability.

"The responsibility of preserving stability and peace in the country lies on everyone. This will help ensure that the nation's economy, which first showed signs of a recovery two years ago, would continue to improve," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the people should not carry out actions which could directly or indirectly retard the road to economic recovery.

He said the prices of

commodities and exports, particularly electronics parts and textiles, had now increased, adding that manufactured goods were the biggest exports last year.

Dr Mahathir said the improvements were due largely to the efforts of the government but certain quarters were refuting this by claiming that the recovery was solely from greater overseas demand for the commodities.

"It is true there are more demands now from overseas. But many other countries facing a similar situation are not enjoying the benefits from the price increase of the commodities because the condition in their country does not permit it. It is because we managed our political and economic affairs with care, have been prudent in spending the people's money and strived to increase productivity, that we were able to reap the benefits from the global economic recovery," he said.

"At one time during the global recession, demand for Malaysia's goods dropped but our economic situation was not as bad as that of some countries which had spent lavishly when they were doing well."

Dr Mahathir said with efficient financial management, Malaysia had also managed to repay its debts ahead of schedule.

With regards to efforts

to increase productivity, Dr Mahathir said it should not be left to the Government alone to do it.

He said workers and managers should pool their energies and ideas to use to the full potential whatever resources they have so that everyone concerned would enjoy the benefits.

"An action that freezes capital or hamper productivity will be useless. Everyone concern should avoid such actions," he added.

Citing an example of productivity, Dr Mahathir said \$1 billion kept at home and not invested would not yield anyone, including the owner of the money, any benefits.

"But \$10 that is actively circulated will bring about much benefits to those who use it," he added.

Dr Mahathir said that although much had been said about stability and the benefits it brought to the people there needs to be a constant reminder because it was not an easy task to manage a people of diverse languages, religions and culture.

"We (the Barisan) can be proud that we have managed to run the country and develop it without resulting in any instability. There must be something right that we have done," he said.

On the MCA, Dr Mahathir commended party leaders for the co-operation they had given to their counterparts in the other component parties of the Barisan.

He said MCA president Datuk Dr Ling Liong Sik and other party leaders know what was expected of them and would prefer not to "shout in public" the various matters they wished to raise in the government.

"Just knock at my door. I cannot give any guarantees but my Cabinet colleagues and I will certainly consider anything that is reasonable," he said.