

PM: We can have our own political identity

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KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. — Malaysians can have their own political identity through the acceptance of one nation, one race and one language, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

The Prime Minister said when the country achieved Independence, "we made an agreement to accept the official name of the country as Malaysia, our race as Malaysians and our language as Bahasa Malaysia."

Dr Mahathir said this did not mean that the Government aimed to abolish any one race or erase its racial identity.

"Recognising and accepting Malaysia, the Malaysian race and Bahasa Malaysia does not make us all Malays," Dr Mahathir said when he launched the community unity programme.

"From the ethnic angle, we are still Chinese, Indians, Ibans, Kadazans or Muruts.

"We become the Malaysian race only as a political identity which owns a specific nation," he added.

With the explanation, he hoped the various races, especially the older generation, would not be afraid of losing their ethnic identity, language or culture.

He said a community with one nation, a common language and one culture would undoubtedly have an identity.

"We will then not be confused with the other races, especially from the countries of our origin. If we are proud of this recognition, then there exists the true Malaysian race," he added.

The Prime Minister asked that the practice of having communal activities confined to one race be reduced and replaced by one which involved all races.

"We have this habit where if a Minister is Chinese, the function he is attending will comprise the Chinese and if the Minister is a Malay, then the audience is also Malays."

On those who play on racial sentiments, Dr Mahathir said the Government should not be afraid of being condemned as intolerant to the extent that it allowed an issue to get out of hand.

"If there are riots and violence, the Government will also be condemned. It is better to be condemned without any riot breaking out than to be condemned for not taking action to prevent the riot."

He said that the Government was tolerant of dissenting views and in fact, criticisms towards the Government were hurled freely without being curbed.

But he said the Government could not accept criticisms based on racial issues which could threaten the nation's harmony.

About 2,500 people, including Cabinet Ministers, attended the ceremony at the Putra World Trade Centre.