

Create true Malaysian

race,
says

Dr M

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KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. — Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today spoke of the need to create a Malaysian race — one that is easily recognisable and unique to Malaysia.

However, such an identity should be created without eliminating the cultural elements of the various races that had made Malaysia their homeland, the Prime Minister said when launching the community unity programme at the Putra World Trade Centre here.

Dr Mahathir said the Government had no intention of eliminating any race, adding that all the various races were free to maintain their identity in terms of language, religion and culture.

"However, when we achieved independence we made an agreement to accept the official name of the country as Malaysia, our race as the Malaysian race and our language as Bahasa Malaysia," he said.

Dr Mahathir said admitting and accepting Malaysia, the Malaysian race and language would not make "us all Malays".

"From the ethnic point of view, we will remain Chinese or Indian or Iban or Kadazan. We are Malaysians solely as a political identity, in that, we belong to a particular nation."

However, Dr Mahathir said accepting a political identity alone would not lead to an emergence of a meaningful Malaysian race.

Ethnic identity

"We must have a language and culture that will determine that we are truly a Malaysian race and that we owe our loyalty to the same nation."

He said it would be meaningless for Malaysians to admit they were from the same race if the various races did not interact with one another.

Dr Mahathir hoped that with this clarification the older generation who still had certain racial prejudices would not be concerned about losing their ethnic identity.

He said they should not doubt the Government's efforts to spread Bahasa Malaysia, adding that if the people could interact and communicate with one another through a common language, the country would be

★ TURN TO P2, COL 4

Greater interaction needed: PM

★ FROM PAGE ONE

able to create a culture that is truly recognised as Malaysian.

He said a society that had a common nation, language and culture would be able to have the same identity and would be recognised as one race, adding that "wherever we go this recognition will be a reality".

"We will no longer be mistaken for another race. When we take pride in this recognition, it is then that a true Malaysian race will emerge."

Dr Mahathir also said there was a greater need for racial in-

teraction in all social activities. He said that too many of such activities were now limited to a single race.

As an example, he said, if a function was officiated by a Chinese Minister, it would be attended by mostly Chinese and if it was officiated by a Malay Minister, the crowd would be largely Malays.

Dr Mahathir referred to the Malacca Sultanate, noting that there was true interaction between the races during that period.

He said inter-racial mar-

riages were common, adding that this had led to the creation of the Chinese Baba, Malacca Portugese and Malacca Chetti communities.

While preserving their own ethnic identity, the people in Malacca succeeded in creating an identity that is unique to Malacca.

Unfortunately, Dr Mahathir said, since independence there were efforts made to entrench racism to an extent that culture among the non-Malays, which had Malaysian elements, had disappeared.

He said such a trend was regretted as the culture in the Malacca Sultanate was a good example of racial integration in Malaysia.

Dr Mahathir was confident that the country's objective of creating a Malaysian identity would be achieved in two generations, if the older generation stopped influencing the younger generation with their "unfounded worries of losing their ethnic identity".

He also said the community unity campaign was carried out to speed up the process of creating a united Malaysian race.