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mahathir-newsweek

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New York, April 25 (Bernama-reuter) — Malaysian prime minister Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir Mohamad has rejected charges of extremism and said his government is being fair when all groups in the pluralistic country are unhappy, newsweek international reported yesterday.

Asked about "extreme measures," such as arresting 100 people last fall, newsweek quoted him as saying in an interview in the Malaysian capital, Kuala Lumpur: "we have always to listen to the grouses of the different races and we have to find some way of pacifying them."

"We have always contended in this country that when everybody is unhappy, then we are doing well. It means that we are not giving any community all that they ask for."

Of the 13 million people in peninsular Malaysia, 56.2 per cent were Bumiputras or Malays in 1985. Another 33 per cent were ethnic Chinese and 10.1 per cent ethnic Indian.

Mahathir blamed British colonial policy for the explosive racial mix and said those people who were against ethnic cooperation eventually would migrate to Australia or Canada "and we don't mind that."

A year ago, Mahathir won re-election as party chief by only 43 votes of the 1,479 ballots cast by the hierarchy of the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO). He re-organised UMNO and got rid of his major opponents.

Asked about the rift in the party, he said, "it is a temporary matter. It will be resolved. The vast majority of the people support the present party and the present government."

He added: "I move around freely, more than any previous prime minister.... The usual bodyguards just look at me from a distance. It is not the tradition of Malays to assassinate people." — Bernama-Reuter.