

PM on our people's special relationship

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'Every race wants peace and harmony to prevail'

KUALA LUMPUR, Sun. — Racial harmony among Malaysians is unique and instrumental in ensuring a united and peaceful nation, Prime Minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

He dismissed allegations that there was racial conflict in the country and said that the relationship among Malaysians was special and important to each race which wanted peace and harmony to prevail.

"Since independence we have worked hard to perpetuate racial harmony. Unity among the races is important to us and we will continue to strengthen that," he said when launching the Federal Territory Semarak campaign at Jalan Gurney (now Jalan Semarak) here.

Dr Mahathir said the Semarak gathering was aimed, among others, to foster closer relations among the races.

He said the Government would continue carrying out programmes that would

NST pictures by SALEH OSMAN, SHUKOR RAHIM and TUN IZHAR ISHAK

strengthen racial unity.

"Today we can see how the people of different races are ready to gather and celebrate Semarak," he said.

Dr Mahathir said a unique feature in Malaysia was the "open house" which was celebrated by the different races during religious festivals.

He said many foreign diplomats and visitors had told him that this was peculiar to Malaysia and not practised elsewhere.

"During religious festivals, we not only visit our friends but we are welcomed at the homes of strangers," he said.

Contrary to the belief that Malaysians were experiencing racial conflict, Dr Mahathir said Malaysians often found that they were not afraid to mix and interact with one another.

Dr Mahathir said while

there was no racial conflict in Malaysia, it was normal to experience "a bit of tension" in a multi-racial country of many religions and languages.

He said this was not strange in view of the seriousness of racial conflicts in other countries which had gone on for a great lengths of time.

On Kuala Lumpur, Dr Mahathir said since independence the city had progressed tremendously.

Kuala Lumpur, he added, was no longer inhabited by the people of one race but was a multi-racial city.

Dr Mahathir said it was Malaysians, and not the colonialists, who were responsible for the remarkable growth of the city.

He said some countries were not as lucky as Malaysia in that they did not progress after independence but had retrogressed.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysians were proud of their achievement and wanted to perpetuate the peace and stability they enjoyed.