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PARLIAMENT-MAHATHIR
BM

KUALA LUMPUR, JULY 2 (BERNAMA) -- PRIME MINISTER DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR MOHAMAD IN REFUTING OPPOSITION CLAIMS THAT CHINESE IN THIS COUNTRY ARE OPPRESSED STRESSED THAT THEY ARE INDEED GIVEN A WIDE RANGE OF FREEDOM IN ALL CULTURAL, RELIGIOUS, EDUCATIONAL AND ECONOMIC FIELDS.

HE SAID THE FATE OF THE CHINESE COMMUNITY IN MALAYSIA WAS FAR BETTER WHEN COMPARED WITH THE SITUATION IN OTHER COUNTRIES WHERE THEY WERE CONSIDERED SECOND CLASS CITIZENS AND DENIED RIGHTS AND FREEDOM IN MANY FIELDS.

WINDING UP THE DEBATE ON THE MID-TERM REVIEW OF THE FIFTH MALAYSIA PLAN IN THE DEWAN RAKYAT, HE SAID THE CHINESE COMMUNITY IN MALAYSIA WAS FREE TO PRACTISE THEIR RELIGION AND CULTURE WITHOUT HARASSMENT.

+UNLIKE IN CERTAIN COUNTRIES WHERE PEOPLE OF CHINESE DESCENT WERE NOT ALLOWED EVEN TO STAY,+ THE PRIME MINISTER SAID.

HE ADDED: +IN OTHER COUNTRIES, THE CHINESE WERE NOT ONLY DISALLOWED TO USE THEIR MOTHER TONGUE BUT WERE ALSO PREVENTED FROM HAVING CHINESE SCHOOLS, COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES AND FORCED TO CHANGE THEIR NAMES TO RESEMBLE THAT OF THE LOCAL PEOPLE.+ -- MORE
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PARLIAMENT-MAHATHIR 2 KUALA LUMPUR

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID THE SITUATION IN MALAYSIA WAS FAR DIFFERENT EVEN WHEN COMPARED WITH SOME WESTERN COUNTRIES WHERE CHINESE SCHOOLS WERE NOT ALLOWED.

HE ALSO COMPARED THE POSITION OF CHINESE IN OTHER COUNTRIES WHERE THEY WERE THE TARGET OF ACCUSATIONS AND IDENTIFIED WITH MAJOR CRIMES AND SECRET SOCIETIES AND WERE EVEN CONSIDERED AS COMMUNIST AGENTS.

THE LIFESTYLE AND TREATMENT ACCORDED TO THE CHINESE COMMUNITY WAS DIFFERENT IN MALAYSIA FOR THEY WERE NEVER CRITICISED FOR PRACTISING THEIR CULTURE AND RELIGION OR FOR LEARNING THEIR LANGUAGE OR SPEAKING THEIR MOTHER TONGUE.

FROM THE ECONOMIC ASPECT, MANY COUNTRIES NEVER ISSUED TRADING LICENCES TO THE CHINESE WHO HAD TO DO BUSINESS ON THE BORROWED LICENCES OF THE LOCAL PEOPLE BUT IN MALAYSIA THE CHINESE COULD ENGAGE IN BUSINESS JUST LIKE THE OTHER PEOPLE, THE PRIME MINISTER SAID. -- MORE
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REFERRING TO MATTERS RAISED BY OPPOSITION LEADER LIM KIT SIANG (DAP-TANJUNG), THE PRIME MINISTER REMINDED THE OPPOSITION THAT NOT MANY CHINESE IN THIS COUNTRY SHARED ITS VIEWS OR THOUGHTS.

+THEY ARE LOYAL PEOPLE,+ HE ADDED. AT THIS POINT ENCIK LIM ROSE TO SEEK CLARIFICATION AS TO WHETHER HIS LOYALTY WAS BEING QUESTIONED.

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR REPLIED HE WAS UNABLE TO SAY WHETHER ENCIK LIM WAS LOYAL OR NOT.

THE PRIME MINISTER ADDED: +WE DO NOT PUT EVERY CHINESE IN ONE BASKET AS THE GOVERNMENT DOES NOT CONSIDER ALL CHINESE AS DISLOYAL.+

TO A REQUEST FOR CLARIFICATION FROM THE MEMBER FOR BUKIT BINTANG ENCIK LEE LAM THYE, DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR MOHAMAD SAID OPPOSITION MEMBERS WHO CRITICISED GOVERNMENT POLICIES WERE NOT CONSIDERED DISLOYAL BUT ONLY THOSE WHO OPENLY DISCREDITED MALAYSIA IN THE EYES OF THE WORLD.

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR HIT OUT AT ENCIK LIM, WHO ACCORDING TO HIM, DID NOT AT ALL DEBATE ON THE GOVERNMENT'S LEVEL OF ACHIEVEMENT UNDER THE FIFTH MALAYSIA PLAN BUT INSTEAD TOOK ADVANTAGE OF THE DEBATE TO RAISE MATTERS TO SERVE HIS POLITICAL AND PARTY INTERESTS.

-- BERNAMA
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