

# Dr M: Few match our policy on language, culture

BT 18 SEP 1990

THE liberal policy in Malaysia which allows various communities freedom to practise their cultures and mother tongues is something that is unmatched in many other countries.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said yesterday that even in countries in the West, which claim to be the great proponents of liberalism, there is hardly any place for

other languages and cultures than those of their own.

He said this when opening the annual meeting of the Malaysian Federation of Hokkien Associations in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said some countries even put up barriers to restrict the entry of people whom they dislike and do not belong to their communities.

BT 18 SEP 1990

"Look at history, they even drove away and killed those they did not like," he added.

He said in Malaysia, community-based associations such as the Hokkien associations are allowed to be established because the Government trusts that they can mobilise the members' strengths to benefit the country as a whole.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said the Government does not want to see racial unrest, but instead gives priority to peace and stability. He added the country can only progress if there is peace, harmony and stability.

"That is why the Government was not happy with the demonstration at the Cheras toll. It is not the Malaysian way. If we have problems, we can discuss," he said.

The Prime Minister said thanks to peace and stability, the country has managed to register high economic growth in the last few years, a record which few countries can beat.

The Government, he said, has tried to devise the best policy on wealth distribution without affecting economic growth, and the world recognises Malaysia's success where others have failed.

He said there is enough wealth to be shared among Malaysians and one community has to be considerate with the others to maintain prosperity and stability.

While the Government wants to satisfy everybody, he said this is not always possible. "On the whole, we have achieved economic growth without being too unfair to the groups."

The Prime Minister noted there have been complaints from various sectors, but only because they don't get everything they want.