

PM: WE MUST WORK HARDER FOR PEACE

By K. Parkaran

KUALA KANGSAR, Thurs. — Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad urged Malaysians not to take for granted peace and harmony existing in the country.

The Prime Minister said today people should work hard to maintain this situation.

They should learn from the Gulf war that "Muslims will fight against Muslims and Arabs against Arabs, although they are from the same background and speak the same language."

Dr Mahathir was speaking at the opening of the newly-completed 39km Jalan Bendang Kering-Belanja near Senggang, about 20km from here.

"Hundreds of thousands of Muslims were killed as a result of Iraq's refusal to withdraw from Kuwait. This is a fine example as to why we should work harder to maintain unity and harmony," he said.

According to Islam, Muslims are forbidden to take sides when fighting each other, he said.

"We should advise them not to resort to violence to resolve the dispute. That is precisely why Malaysia did not take sides in the Gulf war," Dr Mahathir said, adding that "Islam says if a party does not listen to advice, we must fight them. We had no means to fight the war so we continued with our advice."

"Similarly, Iraq went to war with Iran for eight years with the aim of capturing Iran. But Iraq did not gain anything. The only result was one million Muslims died."

Unfortunately, he said, there were Muslims in the country who insisted on taking sides and even signed up as volunteers to fight for Iraq.

"Three thousand people signed up to go. But thank God, they did not go as they would not have returned," Dr Mahathir said, in an apparent reference to PAS supporters who had signed up.

Dr Mahathir said they had not signed up sincerely but did so because they were angry with the government here.

"These are the people with a narrow outlook. They said roads cannot be eaten without considering that these same roads brought about increased economic activity which benefited the people," he said.

Dr Mahathir said now that the PAS had the opportunity to rule Kelantan, the Federal Government would watch to see if they built roads, as "roads are not for eating."

"That (PAS) government is famous for going back on its words. First, they said cinemas cannot be opened but now they say it is okay. Earlier, they said women cannot work at night and suddenly they say it is okay," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the Federal Government's actions were aimed at helping all, irrespective of racial or religious origin.

He said although there existed differences between the various races in the country, they were merely differences of opinion which did not affect the general racial harmony.