

# Look who's talking, PM chides 'outsiders'

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MALAYSIA'S policies to achieve national integration have been more successful than that of countries which have accused it of not doing it right, says Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Opening a National Unity Advisory Panel meeting in Kuala Lumpur yesterday, he chided "outsiders" who try to show Malaysians the way to national unity and racial harmony when racial problems in their own countries are far worse than in Malaysia, and remain unresolved.

"We are not perfect and may never be, but we are more familiar with our own problems. We have also proven to them that our policies and principles aimed at national integration and the restructuring of society are more successful than theirs," the Prime Minister said.

Malaysians, therefore, should not be influenced by claims by "outsiders" that the country is on the wrong track, he added.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said certain countries which try to impose on Malaysia their values on national integration are, in fact, facing worse racial problems of their own.

"Despite having determined who can, and who cannot, live in their societies, they still face serious problems in national integration," he added.

Some of these countries go to the extent of barring others of different origins, or who refuse to adopt their national traditions and cultures, from being part of their societies.

"And yet they face problems. And now they try to tell us what we should be doing to attain unity. The truth is they know no better and their own problems are far worse than ours," he added.

The Prime Minister urged Malaysians to believe in themselves and in the progress the country is making in achieving national unity.

"The important thing is for us to be less emotional. We need to be moderate in our attitudes and to use our heads in tackling problems."

He said, based on the nation's progress since independence, the 2020 aspiration should be well within reach. "But we cannot afford to be complacent. And we need to be very patient."

The Prime Minister said contrary to accusations thrown by "outsiders", the gap between ethnic groups in Malaysia has narrowed considerably in the last 34 years.

Speaking to reporters, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said national integration does not have to be at the expense of the cultures, religions or ethnic languages of other races or ethnic groups in this country. The most important aspect of this integration is for the different ethnic groups to recognise one national language and one national culture.

"To achieve this, we will  
Con'td Back Page, Col. 8

## PM chides 'outsiders'

■ FROM PAGE ONE

have to place less emphasis on the differences between one race and another. We can, instead, give more attention to what the various cultures share in common. Once we succeed in achieving this, we will have a national identity which, at the same time, will allow the various ethnic groups to maintain their respective identities," he said.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said in view of the importance of racial harmony to the economic development of the country, it will continue to be given important emphasis by the Government. Sound economic and political strategies alone will not take Malaysia to the ranks of the "developed" nations if the country is plagued by racial riots.