

DR M: GOVT WILL FOSTER TRUE NATIONAL UNITY

By Wong Chun Wai

KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. — Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad called on Malaysians to highlight their similarities instead of harping on their racial differences.

He said the various communities had assimilated the cultural traits of each other.

"We should not purposely destroy what has been assimilated simply because we want to isolate ourselves," the Prime Minister said.

He said after 34 years of independence, almost all the country's citizens had been born here.

"As such, loyalty to the country should no longer be questioned although the level of patriotism can still be enhanced," he said when opening the National Unity Advisory Panel meeting at Carcosa Seri Negara.

The panel, headed by Unity and Community Development Minister Datuk Napsiah Omar, was formed to recommend ways to foster national unity.

Dr Mahathir said although Malaysia had achieved numerous successes to be proud of, there was still a lot to be done to build a truly Malaysian race by the year 2020.

"Unity does not mean that the cultures, reli-

gions, languages and dialects of the various races would be discarded," he said.

He said the Government's policies had successfully overcome the country's multi-racial problems and imbalances.

"Foreigners may claim to know more about our country's problems and ways to solve them, but the truth is they do not know because problems in their own countries remained unresolved.

"We know our problems better," he said, adding that people should not be influenced by foreigners'

allegations that Malaysians would fail.

What was important for Malaysians was to subdue emotions and to be moderate in their approach in solving problems.

Dr Mahathir said without unity and harmony the country cannot promote the political, social and economic environment necessary to raise its level of development.

He said the creation of a Malaysian race included other factors, like striving for a matured democratic political system which protected the rights and interests of the individuals and those of

the community.

The Government, he said, would continue to strive for a more homogeneous community in terms of the socio-economic standing among the races.

Dr Mahathir later presented certificates to the 33 panel members which included former DAP deputy secretary-general Lee Lam Thye, Catholic Research Centre director Dr Paul Tan Chee Ing, Malayan Banking deputy chairman Datuk Richard Ho, businessman Datuk Dr Mokhzani Abdul Rahim, and Kuala Lumpur Datuk Bandar Tan Sri Elyas Omar.