

Racial harmony crucial to success: PM

By AHIRUDIN ATTAN ST110 SEP 1991 (P)

FOREIGNERS cannot deny the strong sense of goodwill that exists in multi-ethnic Malaysia, Prime Minister Datuk **Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad** said. "We've achieved what I doubt they (the foreigners) could achieve if given the same multi-racial background."

He said Malaysia has succeeded in avoiding communalism through the goodwill of its various races and, at the same time, using this harmonious co-existence to pave the way for rapid and equitable economic progress and national development.

The Prime Minister pointed out that in most of the countries that suffer racial riots, the minority ethnic group or migrant citizens are small in proportion to the population.

Malaysia, despite having a large percentage of different races, has managed not only to avert racial riots but, instead, foster close understanding among them.

"No foreigners can deny that, in this (respect), we have achieved more than most countries, even the advanced countries," he told newsmen after opening a goodwill photography exhibition and prize presentation ceremony in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir, however, cautioned Malaysians against taking for granted these good ties and understanding

among the **various** races.

"A lot more must be done. The people, especially young generation Malaysians, must take stock of the **situation** and come up with answers to how we can eliminate racial bias and pave the way for even closer ties. Each race has different cultural values and backgrounds. The thing to do now is to understand better the way of life of the other races," he said.

In his address, the Prime Minister underscored goodwill as a crucial prerequisite in efforts to make Malaysia a **developed nation** as envisaged in the people's Vision 2020.

"We can stand proud as a nation and a people (for having) achieved peaceful co-existence and economic progress. To guarantee that Malaysians continue to enjoy these, the people, particularly the (present) generation, must ensure that the existing goodwill is sustained," he added.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said efforts by individuals, **organisations** and states in fostering better understanding among the people need to be upgraded constantly to attain **this** goal.

The **Government**, on its part, will continue to **direct** its efforts at eradicating poverty and distributing wealth equitably through policies made out in the National Development **Policy**, he added.