

Winning style

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PM: Stay united to ensure continued growth

By WONG CHUN WAI

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysians of all races must continue to be united to ensure the country's rapid economic growth, Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir Mohamad said yesterday.

The Prime Minister advised all Barisan Nasional component parties not to take for granted the co-operation they had nurtured but to further enhance this cooperation and understanding.

Dr Mahathir, who is Barisan Nasional chairman, said no one could deny that the standard of living of the people was far higher and better than that of most developing countries.

"The prosperity experienced by Malaysians continues to grow even though most developed and developing countries are experiencing slow growth," he said when opening the MCA's 39th annual general assembly.

Dr Mahathir said the level of development and stability in Malaysia was due to the co-operation and administrative style of the Barisan government.

Most important, he said, was that the wealth created by the government had been fairly and equitably distributed to all.

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"For the Chinese community, the opportunity to do business and engage in other economic activities is wide open so long as they are willing to work hard," he said.

Dr Mahathir said perhaps, this was the reason that the business community today was not making "noise" against the Government as there were ample business opportunities for them.

"The fact that our economy is experiencing good growth is easily evidenced by the MCA's success in collecting millions of ringgit over a short period of time for the Tunku Abdul Rahman College Trust Fund."

The country's experience

had shown that it was possible to achieve rapid growth while ensuring equitable distribution of wealth at the same time, he said.

"The Government does not stop the Chinese from expanding their businesses or hinder their access to education," he said.

But the community themselves, he added, must realise how important it is for them to take into account the concept of fairness and equitable distribution of the nation's wealth among the ethnic groups.

"In this matter, they should accept the active and effective participation of non-Chinese in their business," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the principle of sharing was an important basis for a fair relation-

ship among the Barisan component parties.

He reminded Barisan parties to be wary and cautious of certain quarters, especially the opposition parties, such as the DAP which would like to see the coalition divided.

The DAP would rather see that "the Chinese community isolate itself and not co-operate with the other races, and therefore the Chinese must always be cautious and not blindly follow or be easily influenced by the DAP's propaganda, he said.

Dr Mahathir said the Barisan Nasional would not compete with those who were extreme on racial matters or those who misused religion.

"We see the DAP, while opposing Chinese conversion to

Islam, are unconcerned when the Chinese becomes Christians, for instance," he said.

He said this opposition was part of the attitude of the DAP leaders who disliked Islam and the Malays, he said.

He advised the non-Malay parties within the Barisan Nasional not to compete with the DAP in this area.

"There is no coercion in Islam. Islam forbids any conversion through coercion or deceit.

"Those who wish to convert should accept Islam voluntarily," he said.

If they were tricked or coerced, they could not be true Muslims and their reconversion to their original religion become their personal problems, he added.

Dr Mahathir also expressed confidence that the Chinese would continue to support the MCA.

The MCA today, he said, was not only stronger but also had succeeded in safeguarding the interests of the Chinese in the context of a plural society.

The support was proven by the success of the MCA in garnering financial aid from the Chinese for TAR College.

On the other hand, the raising of funds by the opposition for the purpose of discrediting the country among foreigners had failed, he said.

Dr Mahathir said the MCA was more capable of uniting the Chinese in Malaysia than the opposition and he believed that the Chinese would continue to support the MCA.