

CNS2858

U GE 16-09 00180 EG098

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CHRISTIANS IN SABAH NOT OPPRESSED, SAYS MAHATHIR
Mahathir-Christians

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TAWAU, Sept 16 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today criticised certain quarters in Sabah for spreading lies overseas that Christians in the state were oppressed.

The prime minister said he was surprised when people asked him during his visits abroad why the Christians in Sabah were oppressed by the government.

+The intention of these people (who spread the lies) is solely to win sympathy and to conceal their own wrongdoing,+ he said when addressing about 20,000 people at the Barisan Nasional (BN) Youth gathering at the Tawau municipal padang, here.

The gathering, attended by all component parties of the BN, was held to mark the 29th anniversary of the formation of Malaysia. The event was telecast live nationwide by TV Malaysia.

Dr Mahathir said the government had never oppressed anyone as had happened in many other countries but always accorded fair and equal treatment to all communities and religions in the country. -- more

▼16/09/20-02MST

CNS2871

U GE 16-09 00170 EG100

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REPEAT

Mahathir-Christians 2 Tawau

He said that even in the gathering he was addressing there were many Christians and they mixed cordially with people of other religions in the spirit of goodwill without harbouring any suspicions.

In fact, leaders of other countries had praised Malaysia for its political success in maintaining stability despite having a multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multi-cultural population, he said.

He said the people of Sabah should observe Sept 16 as the date of their independence within Malaysia to achieve progress together with the other states.

Dr Mahathir said they should consider themselves as part of the united Malaysian community and should refrain from being influenced by certain groups which wanted to isolate the state from the rest of the country.

+Although the groups say they have no intention of isolating Sabah from Malaysia, the spirit of their struggle indicates they want to separate Sabah from the other states,+ he said. -- more

▼16/09/20-23MST

CNS2893

U GE 16-09 00178 EG101

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Mahathir-Christians 3 Tawau

Dr Mahathir said that from the time Sabah joined Malaysia 29 years ago, the federal government had never harboured any evil intention against the state but always helped in its development.

He said that from the beginning the federal government had spent much money to assist Sabah, particularly when the state had yet to have its own source of wealth.

The prime minister said that after Sabah became independent within Malaysia, the federal government financed the police and armed forces to maintain security in Sabah and then helped in the growth of education to enable the people enjoy prosperity.

Unfortunately, he said, certain groups in Sabah were now taking a step backwards by fanning the spirit of parochialism and had enforced the use of the passport for other Malaysians to enter Sabah.

On the other hand, he said, no one had any grudge against the people of Sabah going to the states in the peninsula to seek greener pasture. -- more

▼16/09/21-05MST

aae tbe

Mahathir-Christians 4 Tawau

+Many Sabahans have gone to the peninsula without restrictions. Many have bought companies there, but there have been no complaints only rejoice because we are all one Malaysian race,+ he said.

He said it was strange for a Malaysian from any other state who came to Sabah to have his passport stamped with the words +Selamat Datang Ke Malaysia+ (Welcome to Malaysia).

He said certain leaders in Sabah attempted to confuse the people in the state by saying that the use of the passport was for the security of Sabahans.

+These leaders do not want to see political parties in Sabah cooperating with the federal government. They want to isolate Sabah and they seek the support of the people by fanning the emotions of the Sabahans against the peninsula,+ he said.

He said they wanted to isolate Sabah from the supervision of the federal government so that they would be free to do as they liked in the state. -- more

▼16/09/21-24MST

CNS2921

U GE 16-09 00152 EA122

aae tbe

Mahathir-Christians 5 Tawau

+Actually, their target is Sabah's forest (wealth) for certain people of Sabah only. They are afraid that others will see what they are doing,+ he said.

Dr Mahathir said the BN presence in Sabah was to explain the struggle to unite the people of the various communities and religions so that Sabah would emerge as a developed state as Sarawak was now.

On Sept 16 as the historical date of Sabah's entry into Malaysia, the prime minister said the day should be observed on Aug 31 but owing to bureaucratic problems it fell on Sept 16.

+But the date should not be a factor which should separate us. We are still Malaysians,+ he said.

He said Sarawak also joined Malaysia on that date but it did not distance itself from the other states. -- more

▼16/09/22-03MST

CNS2926

U GE 16-09 00165 EA123

aae tbe

Mahathir-Christians 6 (last) Tawau

Dr Mahathir said that though the colonial administrators did not have confidence in Malaysia's ability to forge cooperation among the communities, the fact remained that all communities in Malaysia had developed together.

On the other hand, the countries which were once colonial powers were having difficulty uniting their communities, so much so that they were faced with strife, said.

The prime minister criticised developed countries which dragged their feet when it came to helping the people of Bosnia-Herzegovina, the former republic of Yugoslavia suffering from atrocities committed by neighbouring Serbia.

Also present at the gathering were the Prime Minister's wife, Datuk Seri Datin Paduka Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali, Sarawak Chief Minister Tan Sri Abdul Taib Mahmud, Sabah Umno Deputy Liaison Chief Tun Datu Mustapha Datu Harun, BN Youth chairman Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak, Information Minister Datuk Mohamed Rahmat and leaders of BN component parties. -- Bernama

▼16/09/22-13MST