

11 APR 1996

LEAD Mahathir - Mesra

GERAK MESRA CAMPAIGN NOT GOVT PROPAGANDA- DR MAHATHIR

KANGAR, April 11 (Bernama) -- The Prime Minister said today the Gerak Mesra programme organised by the Information Ministry should not be viewed as government propaganda aimed at getting the people's support.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the programme was part of the government's efforts to remind the people to practise good values in community living and value the cordial relations among the various races which had ensured peace in the country.

"We don't aim to turn this programme into a platform to project the government's leaders. That's not the reason...if that is the objective we have many other ways," he said when launching the Perlis state level Gerak Mesra campaign at Kompleks Warisan here.

More than 3,000 people attended the function. Perlis is the second state to launch the programme after Kedah which held it last month.

Among the dignitaries present were Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamed Ali, Perlis Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Shahidan Kassim, Perlis Umno Liaison Committee Chairman Tan Sri Dr Abdul Hamid Pawanteh and Information Minister Datuk Mohamed Rahmat.

Dr Mahathir said the government was holding the Gerak Mesra programme as it believed that courtesy and cordial relations were vital for Malaysia's multi-racial society.

"If there is cordiality, there will be peace in the country and peace in society, families will be happier and we'll become an even more progressive nation," he said.

The programme served as a reminder to the people to preserve a harmonious atmosphere and the cordial relations among them.

This had to be nurtured and preserved so that people would not take this situation for granted, the Prime Minister said.

It was like one's health, if not safeguarded there would come a time when the person would contract a disease and would not respond to treatment, he said.

Courtesy and good relations among the races should be nurtured by parents at family level, by teachers at school level and by leaders at other levels so that the future generations would also value it, Dr Mahathir said.

"It's not that we did not experience racial tension. It occurred in 1969 but since then relations among the various races have improved and now it's our objective to further strengthen the relations," he said.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia had received international acclaim as a model state in the area of inter-racial harmony.

He said even Sweden's former Prime Minister Carl Bildt who called on him recently expressed admiration for Malaysia over this.

Dr Mahathir said Bildt felt Malaysia could be the venue for the leaders of Bosnia and Serbia to learn about peaceful life and forging close and cordial ties as practised by the people in Malaysia.

LEAD Mahathir - Mesra 4 (last) Kangar

The Prime Minister said as to whether a country progressed or remained backward depended on its cultural aspects.

A culture incorporating good values would ensure that the society progressed and was respected.

Dr Mahathir also expressed confidence that Perlis would attain progress

on par with other states if the people and the leadership were willing to make efforts towards this end.

Noting Perlis's progress so far, he said the state was at one time only famous for its laksa in Kuala Perlis and satay in Kangar but now it was building speedboats.

Earlier in his speech Shahidan accorded Dr Mahathir the recognition of "Father of Developing Modern Malaysia" for his immense contributions to the development and progress of this country.

He then placed a shash with words to that effect on the Prime Minister.

Dr Mahathir later toured the Gerak Mesra activity stalls in the complex. -- BERNAMA

MFJ AAM