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Mahathir-Pride

MAHATHIR SAYS MALAYSIANS JUSTLY PROUD OF THEIR COUNTRY

LANGKAWI, Aug 16 (Bernama) -- Malaysians are justly proud that their country is a genuinely multiracial nation, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

The Prime Minister said all the various races have not only enjoyed the fruit of stability but they have also benefited from the country's rapid development and prosperity resulting from it.

"It is true there are affirmative actions taken by the government in favour of the Bumiputeras but this is necessary to correct the imbalance among the various races created by the divide-and-rule policy of the British before," he said when opening the two-day Second World Fujian Convention and Malaysia-Fujian Investment and Trade Exhibition at the Mahsuri International Exhibition Centre here.

About 2,500 representatives from some 20 Hokkien associations worldwide, including from Indonesia, the United States, Singapore, the Philippines, Indonesia, Thailand, China and Malaysia are attending the conference organised by the Federation of Hokkien Associations in Malaysia.

The convention, inaugurated in Los Angeles in 1994, is to enable the Fujian clansmen throughout the world to meet, promote relationship and create the basis of trust for future business development and enhancement of trade and investment opportunities in their respective countries.

Dr Mahathir said the affirmative actions were accepted by the various races because they all deemed it fair that everyone should have a fair share of the wealth of this nation.

He added that not only have all Malaysians accepted the actions but they have helped make the policy a success.

"Today, the disparities in the economic development of the races are less prominent. And racial harmony as well as economic growth are the results," he added.

The Prime Minister said while many other multiracial countries have to grapple with the problems associated with being multiracial, Malaysia is free of the kind of violence which characterise most multiracial societies.

He added that the different races live and cooperate well with each other after having learnt "a big lesson from the one race riot in 1969 and decided that there is nothing to be gained from racial or religious violence".

He said: "While we would not claim that race relations in Malaysia are ideal but, by comparison, the Malays, Chinese, Indians, Ibans, Kadazans and others that make up the racial composition of this country are more able to live together harmoniously and in cooperation with each other than those in many other multiracial countries."

Dr Mahathir said Malaysians are tolerant people and this contributed to the peace and stability of the country.

"We know that in Malaysia the different roots of the people do not affect their loyalty to the nation and their identification with it or the other citizens of this country.

"In short, whether they are Fukienese or Cantonese or Hakka or Tamil or Telegu or Malay or Iban, they are all Malaysians with a common focus of loyalty and a common national culture."

The Prime Minister said the manifestations of this tolerance is the building of temples and churches side by side with mosques, the existence of Chinese and Tamil schools and the availability of Chinese and Tamil

newspapers and magazines.

He said in Malaysia, the use of languages and cultures of non-indigenous citizens were not forbidden, nor were its people being compelled to adopt indigenous names. -- BERNAMA

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