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No truth to claims, says Dr Mahathir

Ashraf Abdullah; Jeffrey Ramayah; Patvinder Singh

KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has dismissed claims that minority races have been left behind in national development.

Opening the 51st MIC general assembly today, he said those who continued to claim that their races did not enjoy the country's economic progress maintained a "narrow mindset" which did not look at their achievements in totality.

"We realise that all races are of the opinion that their problems are not given due attention by the Government.

"The Indians also feel that they have not enjoyed much of the benefits.

"This opinion is also shared by other races, including Bumiputeras, because they do not look at themselves in totality.

"On the contrary, they point at specific cases which are seemingly unprogressive," he told the 1,000-odd delegates.

Also present at the opening ceremony were Prime Minister of Mauritius Navinchandra Ramgoolam, BN component party leaders and delegates.

Dr Mahathir, who is BN chairman, said disappointments and dissatisfaction among various races in a multi-racial nation like Malaysia were inevitable.

This was because the Government was not in a position to meet all demands.

"All races have problems and are dissatisfied. If there is any one race fully satisfied and happy, it means that there has been injustice and unfairness."

"I myself have been criticised by the Malays as I am said to have not met their demands. But the fact remains that I cannot afford to meet all the demands of the Malays and the non-Malays."

Dr Mahathir said although it was true that the conditions in some estates were unsatisfactory, most had improved facilities like housing and schools.

"We should also not forget that there are many professionals, especially doctors and lawyers, who are Indians," he said.

"This is also the case in trade unions. Although workers are mostly non-Indians, unions leaders are mostly Indians".

As such, he said, there was no truth that the Indians had been neglected in national development.

"Even in politics, the voice of the Indian leaders is strong, both in the Government and the Opposition," he said adding that for a small community, the number and the role played by the Indians in trade and industry is very big.

Dr Mahathir said BN leaders did not ignore issues if they affected the nation's position and the well-being of the people. Such issues would be discussed among themselves behind closed doors, he said.

"It is this unique way that has enabled the BN to resolve many problems. If racial problems were debated publicly, extremists would take advantage of the situation to incite others".

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