

28 MAR 1998

Mahathir-Calm

SITUATION CALM, PEACEFUL DESPITE MISUNDERSTANDING, SAYS DR M

GRIK, March 28 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today that the situation in Malaysia was calm and peaceful despite some misunderstanding between two races in Pulau Pinang yesterday.

" The misunderstanding is on a certain issue. However, it did not spread (to other areas)," he said when opening the Grik Umno division delegates' meeting, here.

Dr Mahathir, who is also Home Minister, said communal problems in Malaysia were confined to certain places only and did not involve people from other areas.

" We value the peace and harmony prevailing in this country although we have people from various races," he said.

He cited the large gathering of some 5,000 people from various races who had turned up for the function here despite the misunderstanding in Pulau Pinang.

Dr Mahathir said though Malaysians were of various races and religion, the situation was not like in some countries where riots and racial tension often occurred.

" We admit that racial riots occurred on May 13, 1969 in Kuala Lumpur. However, it was contained in a short period of time and ties were restored shortly among the various races which helped to develop the country," he said.

Although there were tensions at initial stages, the situation improved gradually and the people helped each other to implement the New Economic Policy (NEP), he said.

Initially, the NEP faced problems as certain groups opposed and abused it but the government managed to tackle the situation which paved the way for the country's development, he said.

" This is the result of our people's moderation which enable us to live in peace and harmony, cooperate and work in the same place," he said.

" Whether they like it or not, they (foreigners) have to acknowledge that Malaysia's success was extraordinary to have managed to maintain eight per cent economic growth for 10 years consecutively," he said.

Dr Mahathir, who is also Barisan Nasional (BN) chairman, urged the people and political parties to be determined and united to face the present challenges as it was only in this way " we can protect the country from external forces."

-- BERNAMA

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