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Be moderate in demands (HL)

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KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. - Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today Malaysians should remember that they cannot demand everything for their own race as this will not be good for national well-being.

He said if every race demanded everything for itself but the country was not peaceful and did not progress, it would end up getting nothing. It would be more meaningful, said the Prime Minister, if each race had a smaller share but in an economy which was growing.

"So, everyone has to remember that they cannot demand everything for themselves. This applies not only to the Chinese but also to the Bumiputeras," he said in an address at a seminar for Chinese school principals.

Dr Mahathir said this in reference to an appeal by Chinese schools for the Government's help in resolving problems such as the shortage of teachers, textbooks and workbooks, and schools.

Saying the Government would try to solve the problems, he added that it was impossible to satisfy everyone.

"Whenever we do something for one race, we must consider all races. If something is done without considering the sensitivities, there will be disappointment, and the Government cannot develop the country," he said.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia was unique in that the Government provided funds to vernacular schools which did not use the national language as their medium of instruction.

Other countries did not have public-funded vernacular schools except, to a very limited extent, in California which had Spanish schools. Malaysian parents were allowed to send their children to any school, and, in fact, many Malay parents sent their children to Chinese schools, he added.

There was no compulsion to use the national language but those who went to vernacular schools should also be fluent in Bahasa Malaysia, he said.

Referring to the 1969 racial riots, Dr Mahathir said the Government had since striven to correct the imbalances in politics and the economy, by giving the Bumiputeras a bigger economic share and the Chinese a political voice.

He said it has been the Barisan Nasional Government's policy never to excessively favour any one ethnic group and, with this, had succeeded in maintaining peace and harmony in the country.

"I think the best situation is when everyone is not satisfied - Malays, Chinese and Indians," he said to uproarious laughter.

Dr Mahathir said the BN formula has been so successful that it was now being imitated.

"But like all imitation goods, the quality is not there. I hope no one will be tricked by Barisan Tiruan (Imitation Front)," he said, drawing another burst of laughter.

On the role of teachers, he said they had a responsibility to impart knowledge to their students. They could have a political stand, he said, but this should not interfere with their duties.

If they spend their time in school instilling hatred in students, they have failed in their duty. They were traitors, he said, because they were producing a generation without knowledge and who would have no role in the new knowledge-based world.

"I am impressed to see that Chinese school teachers are more serious in imparting knowledge to their students," he said.

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