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Mahathir-Instigate

BE WARY OF GROUPS STIRING RACIAL ISSUES TO WIN VOTES - DR M

KOTA KINABALU, Feb 18 -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad tonight called on Sabahans to be wary of groups which stir up racial and religious issues to win votes.

The prime minister said Barisan Nasional was a party which represented all communities and took actions after taking into account the interests of every race.

"It is because we give due consideration to all races that today the country is enjoying peace and racial harmony," he said when speaking at a Hari Raya-Chinese New Year reception at the Likas Sports Complex here.

With the prevailing peace, Malaysia could sustain political stability and economic growth despite experiencing an economic downturn, said Dr Mahathir.

"Hence we don't really feel the effects of the downturn as experienced by other countries which suffer poverty, unemployment and food shortage," he said.

The prime minister stressed on the need for Sabahans to maintain the prevailing harmony "as we often take for granted that the racial harmony achieved was a normal thing but actually it is something extraordinary.

"When we are healthy we are not grateful. We only appreciate good health when we fall sick," he said.

Dr Mahathir said that only in Malaysia could one see racial harmony in diversity. For instance when Malays, Chinese and Indians dined together they were mindful of the sensitivities with regards to food.

He said if the people failed to value the racial harmony, it could bring disastrous effects to the country.

Dr Mahathir also touched on the New Economic Policy (NEP) which he said had bridged the economic gap among the various races in the country.

"Because the NEP had succeeded in narrowing the gap, we managed to reduce jealousy and racial tensions.

"Only those who are not thankful for the peace and harmony in the country will want to bring down the government which had contributed much to Sabah," he said.

Earlier, Chief Minister Tan Sri Bernard Dompok reiterated his call to Sabahans to put aside differences which could hamper ties among the various ethnic groups in the state.

Appealing to Sabahans to retain the Barisan Nasional government in the upcoming state election, he said only the BN could spearhead Sabah and its people to face the challenges in the next millennium.

-- BERNAMA

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