

23 DEC 2000

Mahathir-Christmas

GOV'T TO ACT FIRMLY AGAINST THOSE UNDERMINING RACIAL HARMONY

KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 23 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the government will take firm action against anyone who tries to destroy racial harmony in the country.

"If there are signs or attempts by any quarters to destroy our racial harmony by playing on sensitive issues like religion and race, the government will take firm action against them in accordance with the existing laws," he said.

He said the government viewed seriously attempts by any quarters to use sensitive issues to further the interests of their race or to seek influence and attract attention.

"The people should realise that in a multi-racial country like Malaysia, unity and cooperation among the races is an important factor to ensure the country's stability, progress and prosperity," Dr Mahathir said in his Christmas message.

He said although the country had a multi-racial and multi-religious population, the people could celebrate their own festivals without hindrance or disruption.

This situation existed because the people appreciated peace and respected each other's beliefs, he said.

He said the people must preserve this situation to reap further benefits from racial unity and harmony and the country's development.

The government would always strive to ensure that the people could continue to live in unity and prosperity, he said.

Dr Mahathir and his wife Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali wished all Malaysians of the Christian faith a "Merry Christmas".

"I am happy that the Christmas celebration in this country can be held in a peaceful and joyous atmosphere," he said.

-- BERNAMA

SR ZS YBY