

# PM: National wealth for all to share

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JOHOR BARU: Malaysians should understand that certain races need the continued support of the Government in order to maintain national unity, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said.

The Prime Minister said it was the Government's policy to ensure that all races get a share of the country's economic wealth and that any disparity in distribution of wealth

could lead to racial friction and clashes.

He said Malaysia had experienced the result of such a disparity and it nearly sent the country into turmoil and chaos.

"If the Government is seen to be helping or according special rights to a certain race, it does not mean that it is practising double standards.

"It does not mean that the Government is ignoring the other races or treating them as second class citizens.

"If the Government is seen as only helping one race, it is because that race is in dire need of extra help and attention.

"I hope that each race can understand this position because it is important for peace and progress," he said at the 55th MIC Convention here yesterday.

Among those present were Menteri Besar Datuk Abdul Ghani Othman, MCA president Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik, Gerakan president Datuk

Seri Dr Lim Keng Yaik and PPP president Datuk M. Kayvaes.

Dr Mahathir said the people should not be divided by their social and economic status, adding that various economic and social policies had been formulated to prevent such divisions.

"If the New Economic Policy and National Development Plan gave emphasis to the bumiputras socio-economic standing, the Outline Perspective Plan and Eighth Malaysia

Plan will take the Indian community into consideration.

"In both policies, the Government has stated that special rights in development and the economy be afforded to the Indians."

Later at another function, Dr Mahathir expressed hope that Malaysia would not experience internal problems while the Government looked for solutions to weather the impact of the economic slowdown in the United States.

He said racial problems and

riotings would not help efforts to revive the economy but would cause further setbacks.

He was speaking at a luncheon attended by some 2,000 people in honour of his two-day visit to Johor which ended yesterday.

He also commended the rapid development in Johor, adding that its "developed neighbour" had influenced the environment and expressed confidence that the state could achieve developed status by the year 2005.