

Needs of minority groups to be attended to

Post 31 JUL 2001

KOTA KINABALU, Mon. — Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today gave a commitment that the Government would give appropriate attention to the needs of the minority ethnic groups in Sabah and Sarawak.

Stressing the importance for all races to progress together, he said the Government recognised that a lot more needed to be done to improve the well-being of the minority ethnic groups in the States, which comprised of Kadazandusun, Murut, Iban, Dayak, Melanau, Bidayuh and Rungus who are classified as Bumiputera together with the Malays.

Dr Mahathir was opening the United Pasok Momogun Kadazandusun-Murut Organisation 7th annual congress at the Magellan Suter Hotel here.

Dr Mahathir said the need to give attention to the minor ethnic groups was included in the Third Outline Perspective Plan (OPP3).

But, he said, the minor ethnic groups must accept that not all their requests could be fulfilled as the Government also had to consider the interest of the other races.

Describing the Kadazandusun and Murut as a community within the Bumiputera community, he said a particular community must not just think about themselves

only, but must also consider the interest of others.

He said the attention given to the ethnic groups in Sabah and Sarawak did not involve the provision of a special allocation.

He said it was only fair for the Government to give attention to them, especially those in the rural areas who were living in poverty.

The Prime Minister said the need to be fair to all the communities from different racial and religious backgrounds was paramount to ensure continued peace and prosperity in the country.

“We do not want a situation in which a particular community dominates everything,” he said.

Such a situation, if allowed to happen, could result in dissatisfaction and lead to racial tension and chaos, thus affecting efforts to develop the country.

The Government had been striving towards increasing the economic cake to ensure that all the races will benefit from the country’s economic success.

Dr Mahathir, who is also Barisan Nasional chairman, said through the BN’s concept of power sharing, all the communities, irrespective of their sizes, were accommodated.

Citing the racial tension and chaos in several countries that had crippled their economy, Dr Ma-

hathir said the prevailing peace and harmony among the multiracial society of Malaysia had become the envy of many.

He said the distribution of wealth in Malaysia was not a problem because its people were very pragmatic and were prepared to share.

The Prime Minister called on the Bumiputeras, particularly students, to work and study hard so that their future would be guaranteed.

He expressed concern about the performance of Bumiputera students in universities, saying that at the rate they were going they would be “half educated people”.

Dr Mahathir said his concern stemmed from the realisation that the Bumiputera students were to inherit what the Government had provided all these years.

He said that the Bumiputeras must always work towards upgrading their skills so that when their time came to take over the reins of the Government, they would be able to effectively administer the country.

He reiterated the need for Bumiputera students to concentrate on their studies rather than be involved in anti-government activities.