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Balance in economic standing vital

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KUANTAN, Fri. - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said tonight that a balance in the economic standing of the various races was important in order for peace and harmony to prevail in the country.

He said if any of the races was left behind, those from the community would be angry with the race which was more progressive.

"In any society, there will be a feeling of animosity between poor and rich," he said.

"Even in a country with a single ethnic group, poor people are always against rich people."

He was speaking at a dinner hosted by the Federation of Chinese Associations, Malaysia. His wife, Datuk Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali, Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Adnan Yaakob, MCA president Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik and his deputy Datuk Lim Ah Lek and association president Tan Sri Chong Chin Shoong were present.

Dr Mahathir said if the poor were from one race and the rich from another, the feeling of hatred would become worse.

"So, it is important that since we cannot change the races, we have to remove the antagonism caused by the difference in the economic well-being of the different races."

He said race riots could be prevented if the economic gap between the races was reduced.

Dr Mahathir said it would be nice if all the races could march together to achieve the objectives of Vision 2020.

"I do not wish to see one race reaching the status when another is still struggling. So, I really appreciate the co-operation demonstrated by the Chinese."

He said it was important for everybody to be sensitive to other races. Dr Mahathir said he was impressed by the universal values of love, compassion and understanding promoted by Confucious who was quoted earlier by Chong in his speech.

"If we have love and understanding, we can live together peacefully because we are aware of the other's problems.

"Thinking about the problems of others will develop in us the love and sympathy for others who are not as fortunate as we."

He hoped the association would uphold this ideal.

"If the Indians or the Malays were to also subscribe to this, I am confident Malaysia will remain peaceful and we can develop the country faster."

Dr Mahathir said peace and harmony was the mainstay of the country and it should be safeguarded.

"Without peace, businessmen and entrepreneurs, who are mostly Chinese, cannot carry out their businesses profitably."