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`People's loyalty ensured success'

PUTRAJAYA, Wed. - Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today said Malaysia is prosperous and able to attain rapid development because of the people's loyalty and willingness to work together.

The Prime Minister said the people realised they were duty-bound to preserve peace as "they are born here and will also die here".

He said if all races were unwilling to co-operate and make sacrifices, there would be racial riots and disturbances.

"When this happens, it is the people who will suffer as there will be no development if the country is in turmoil," he told a gathering of more than 2,000 members from 118 Chinese associations, guilds and clans at the SMK Putrajaya school.

The event was organised by the Malaysian Federation of Chinese Associations.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia's success today would not have been achieved if the people failed to practise tolerance and moderation.

"If each race wants everything for themselves, in the end, no one will get anything as there is no peace in the country.

"This has happened in many other multi-racial countries. Malaysia is fortunate because our founding fathers were able to create a winning formula in developing the country."

Although Malaysia had once experienced racial riots in 1969, the country's leaders learnt many lessons which made them determined in not wanting to see a recurrence of the black episode.

The situation, he said, was different in other countries which never saw an end to their communal and ethnic clashes.

In recognition of his leadership, Dr Mahathir was given a honour by the Chinese community in a tea-drinking ceremony.

The Prime Minister and wife Datuk Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali were each presented with a cup of tea, symbolising their respect for his leadership and services to the country.

The ceremony was started by Liew Poon Siak, president of Gabungan Ikatan dan Persatuan Cina Kuala Lumpur dan Selangor, representing the 118 associations.

Dr Mahathir said he was touched by the gesture, adding this was the first time he had been given such a recognition by the community.

He said the action was proof of their loyalty to the country.

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