

13 APR 2001

Mahathir-Vaisakhi

GOVERNMENT ASSURES THE RIGHT OF EVERY MALAYSIAN

KUALA LUMPUR, April 13 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today that every citizen in this country, irrespective of whether he or she belonged to the majority or minority community, will have his or her rights guaranteed by the government.

The Prime Minister said there was no race discrimination in Malaysia and every citizen had the freedom of worship, culture and language.

"We in Malaysia are very lucky as our multi-racial and multi-religious country has various cultures and customs which we should value as treasures that enrich us as citizens of this country," he said in a message in conjunction with Vaisakhi celebrations today.

Vaisakhi is celebrated by Sikhs throughout the world to commemorate the revelation of the Khalsa order in 1699.

Celebrated at the start of the month of Vasakh, it marks the end of the harvest season in Punjab, where on this day thousands gather wearing colourful costumes, playing traditional games and singing and dancing to the tune of bhangra.

Dr Mahathir said that although the Sikhs were among the minority race in Malaysia, they were treated equally and did not face any obstacle or discrimination while carrying out their religious rites and rituals.

"This is something Malaysians should cherish. We should be grateful and count our blessings which we are enjoying today as Malaysians and continue to work hard at improving them," he said.

The Prime Minister said although citizens of the country were made up of various races different in very aspect, the tolerance practised thus far had helped foster unity, which has been the norm among a majority of the citizens.

He said in some countries, the minority communities were not only subjected to discrimination but were also not allowed to practice their cultural and religious beliefs.

"But this does not happen in Malaysia. With the wise governance since independence, we have observed unity and harmony based on tolerance and cooperation between the communities," he added.

Dr Mahathir also said it would be very unfortunate if the citizens of this country risk harmony and peace just for personal gain or race.

He said whatever differences that exist, they can be settled through discussions.

"We are tolerant and rational citizens and there is no reason why we should blindly follow our emotions in solving any problem. This will only bring about destruction," he said.

Dr Mahathir said he hoped on this auspicious day, all Malaysians, would take the time to reflect and value all the good achievements made as a citizen of an independent nation and pledge to strengthen and improve relations among each other.

The Prime Minister and his wife, Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali wished all Malaysians, especially the Sikhs, Happy Vaisakhi Day.

-- BERNAMA

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