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Mahathir-Schools

GOVT WILL NOT HALT CHINESE, TAMIL SCHOOLS' GROWTH, SAYS DR M

KUCHING, Sept 24 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today the government will not stop the growth of Chinese and Tamil schools in the country.

He said the presence of many Chinese and Tamil schools in the country was solid proof of the government's commitment to protect the interests of all races especially in educational development.

"The government would like to give an assurance that it would not try to block Tamil and Chinese education but instead we'll complement their development," he said when addressing students, teachers and parents of Chung Hua No 4 Secondary School here.

Unlike other countries, Dr Mahathir said Malaysia encouraged other races to preserve their mother tongue although Bahasa Melayu was the country's national language.

Dr Mahathir said it was the Barisan Nasional's (BN) policy to safeguard the interest of all races and this had been proven with the appointment of cabinet ministers at federal and state level consisting of various races.

He said the federal cabinet comprising ministers of various races -- Chinese, Tamil and the races in Sabah and Sarawak -- bore testimony of the federal government's recognition of the races' contributions to nation-building.

He said Sarawak was among the best examples in protecting the interests of all races as almost all the races were represented in the state cabinet to enable them to voice out their problems.

He said the development of Sarawak founded on strong racial unity must be continued by electing the present BN government.

Dr Mahathir said the BN was a party that represented all races and not a particular race.

On economic growth, Dr Mahathir, who is also Finance Minister, said Malaysia would not face an economic downturn as bad as in 1997 following the current economic slowdown in the United States.

He said the government had made early preparations to avoid a slowdown similar to that experienced by the United States.

While admitting that the country's economic growth would be slower, the prime minister said he was confident the country could overcome it.

He advised all quarters to boost productivity.

-- BERNAMA

RDY TS