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Mahathir-Races

HELPING STRAGGLING COMMUNITIES DOES NOT MEAN FAVOURITISM, SAYS MAHATHIR

JOHOR BAHRU, May 19 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today that certain Malaysian communities still weak in specific areas compared to the other races will continue to get government assistance.

He said if it appeared to be inclined only to help certain communities, this did not mean the government was practising favouritism towards only one race.

"This also does not mean the government is marginalising the other races or neglecting to give them due attention and assistance," he said when opening the 55th MIC general assembly here.

The MIC is a key component of the ruling Barisan Nasional and Dr Mahathir is chairman of the 14-party coalition.

He said if the impression was that the government was only helping a particular community, it was only because the community concerned required extra attention from it.

"Obviously the community has weaknesses and shortcomings that warrant government help," he said.

When it was evident that the community concerned had no opportunities and capabilities to improve its own lot by itself, the government could not just let it be left unaided, he said.

"I hope each community understands this situation because such understanding is crucial to the future peace and progress of our nation," the prime minister said.

Dr Mahathir said the government was determined to restructure the Malaysian society so that each of its components benefit from national prosperity and progress.

"We do not wish to see our people being compartmentalised according to their socio-economic status," Dr Mahathir said.

The New Economic Policy, the National Development Policy, the Third Outline Perspective Plan and the Eighth Malaysia Plan were all geared towards remedying prevalent socio-economic anomalies, he said.

Dr Mahathir said the policies of the government sought to avoid displacement of any particular community from the mainstream of development as socio-economic disparities would only cause racial friction.

"We have experienced the effects of such disparities which took the country to the brink of destruction caused by inequitable distribution of national wealth.

"This is what the government is trying to avoid from happening to our people and our country," he said.

The government realised that bringing development and progress to the people was not something to be delayed, he said.

It would not let the stragglings community to try to better itself on its own without government assistance and supervision, he said.

"We have to create programmes specially to bring our marginalised people out of the rut. Their old lifestyle and daily culture have also to be changed according to the times," the prime minister said.

Dr Mahathir reminded Malaysians to preserve unity and peace besides striving to bring interracial understanding and cooperation to even higher level.

"By constantly reminding ourselves of each other's racial sensitivities and maintaining tolerance and understanding, it shall be easy for us to

avoid the pitfalls of a racial strife.

"We should not let ourselves to be gullible and let others instigate us into willing to do anything to destroy unity and our nation," the prime minister added.

-- BERNAMA

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