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PM reassures Chinese community

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KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. - Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad tonight said the Chinese community should not be unduly worried with the Government's recent declaration that Malaysia is an Islamic State.

All Malaysian Chinese were given the Government's "categorical undertaking" that their rights as citizens as stated in the Constitution would not be taken away, the Prime Minister added.

"The Chinese community should not be worried and go around saying that the Government will deprive them of their rights. Please do not listen to people who want to make an issue out of it.

"In Malaysia, the community is always represented in the Government and we have no wish to obstruct or curtail your rights. Your rights will remain your rights."

Dr Mahathir said this at the annual dinner of the Associated Chinese Chambers of Commerce and Industry of Malaysia, a body which represents more than 24,000 Malaysian Chinese companies, individuals and trade associations.

Present were Transport Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik and ACCCIM president Tan Sri Lim Guan Teik.

The Prime Minister called on the community to ignore attempts to split Umno and non-Muslim component parties in the Barisan Nasional, particularly the MCA and Gerakan.

"I have to explain this... otherwise there will be unrest and suspicion that might jeopardise Malaysia's stability, which is admired all over the world."

Dr Mahathir also reminded Chinese businessmen "to look abroad to grow our economy" and not be taken in by the tendency of "feeling too comfortable in the company of Ministers".

"We have set up a big trade and exhibition centre in Bahrain to facilitate the export of Malaysian goods to the Gulf States. I hope Malaysian manufacturers will participate and promote Malaysian goods by putting up their exhibits there".

Earlier, Lim said ACCCIM would continue to complement the Government's efforts in promoting economic growth and strengthening the business sector.

"We have two major projects under way to promote Malaysia as a preferred location for business and investment.

"In 2003, ACCCIM will complete the publication of a comprehensive business directory of enterprises and businesses, which will be a good reference to all sectors of the domestic economy and international trade.

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