

15 MAR 2001

Mahathir-Unity

RACIAL UNITY MUST BE APPRECIATED AT ALL TIME, SAYS MAHATHIR

KUANTAN, March 15 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the country's racial unity is something precious and must be appreciated all the time.

He said racial unity prevailing in the country appeared to have been taken for granted by the people and thus it is not appreciated.

"We are not really appreciating it (racial unity), for example if we are healthy we do not really appreciate our health but when we fall sick not only do we seek the cure but we also pray to Allah.

"When we regain (our) health, we (again) forget..." Dr Mahathir said in his speech at the dinner with heads of government departments and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), here tonight.

The Prime Minister said national peace should be appreciated as there was nothing good which came out of chaos, war or internal strife.

He regretted that there were certain parties who thought they could gain from clashes which arose from communal disputes.

Dr Mahathir said nothing beneficial could be gained by provoking others to be angry and creating racial animosity.

Commenting on the clashes between rival groups in the squatter settlements off Jalan Klang Lama, in Petaling Jaya last week, he said all parties should strive to end the feud.

Unfortunately there were certain parties who used the incidents for their political interest, he said.

"They never think that lives will be lost in riots...but (they) only think of their political interest," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the Government would not allow the problem to prolong and he called on the people to back the measures taken by the government to maintain peace in the country.

"The Government's top priority is to ensure that the laws are enforced," he said.

The Prime Minister also urged the NGOs to help the Government in maintaining racial harmony, stability and solidarity.

"The NGOs may not be able to progress if the situation is unstable," he said.

Dr Mahathir also criticised NGOs which were willing to accept foreign assistance just to jeopardise the peace in the country purportedly to see more justice.

"Malaysia is our country. Whether we are Malays, Indians, Chinese, Orang Asli, Orang Ulu, Orang Iban...Malaysia is our country. The time when others ruled and governed has (long) gone, now we are independent and we are responsible for our country," he said.

-- BERNAMA

MS HIS HS ZUL AO