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We won't compromise with groups that threaten peace, says PM

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KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. - The Government will not compromise with radical groups which promote a narrow ideology without respecting the rights of other races and religions.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said Malaysians respected one another and were free to practise their religion and customs without fear or threat.

"However, of late, there are extremist groups which threaten our harmony and peace. The Government will not compromise with any radical group," he said in his Deepavali message.

He added that while Malaysia was an Islamic nation with the majority of its citizens being Muslims, the rights and freedom of other races were protected by the Federal Constitution.

Dr Mahathir said even the smallest group in Malaysia had rights in all fields including politics, society, economy and religion.

Malaysians should appreciate the understanding and tolerance which existed among the people who comprised different races and religions.

"Our country has achieved a lot, much more than many other countries. Malaysia is considered the most successful developing country. All this had been achieved through stability and harmony, unity and tolerance among the different races," he said.

The Prime Minister added that without these values, Malaysia might not have achieved the progress and peace which it had. In other countries, feuds between races and religions had destroyed the nation.

Instability in their own countries led many foreigners to try and smuggle themselves into Malaysia.

"This (illegal immigration) normally happens to developed countries, not developing nations. But almost two million foreigners have entered our country, legally or illegally.

"If our country was not peaceful and progressive, they would not come here," he said.

Malaysians should realise they were fortunate not to have to migrate elsewhere.

"Malaysia is our country and we have to ensure that it remains peaceful and successful," he said.

He believed that Malaysians, especially Hindus, were thankful as they were able to celebrate the festival with joy. He encouraged them to hold open houses for friends of other races and religions, urging all to strengthen peace through this Malaysian tradition.