

20/12/2002

Better to get a slice than a whole cake, says Dr Mahathir

KUCHING, Thurs. - First Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra was behind the principle of multi-racial co-operation which had proven itself over time, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

The Prime Minister said it was the Tunku's idea that it was far better to get a slice of the cake for oneself rather than grab the whole cake.

He said working for one race might eventually lead to a diminished or even non-existent cake.

"So it is better to have a percentage of something than to have 100 per cent of nothing," he said when opening the Sarawak United Peoples' Party's 19th delegates conference here.

"He was a far-sighted man, mild (mannered) man, a man who could get along with almost anybody ...I say almost anybody because he did not get along well with me and I did not get along well with him.

"But that apart, he was a great leader. He was really the Father of Malaysia. We (therefore) call him Bapa Malaysia," he said to applause.

On his decision to step down next October, Dr Mahathir said while some quarters had expressed worries about this, the fact remained that he would have to retire at some time.

"Even if I don't step down, one day I am going to drop dead anyway. It is much better this way when I can prepare someone to take over from me. If I suddenly drop dead without making preparations, it will be difficult for my successor to carry on.

"Of course, I would like to have stepped down in June this year but these people are very persuasive. They twisted my arm and said I had to stay on.

"After that, I am going on a long holiday but I will not forget you (SUPP) and I will always be working for the BN."

Dr Mahathir was optimistic that Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi would be successful in developing the country like the four Prime Ministers before him.

In urging SUPP to give its fullest support to Abdullah, Dr Mahathir said: "Each one will have his own style. Of course you can't have him behaving like me. I am very peculiar in some ways. His smile is different from my smile and his way of talking is different.

"There will be differences but that is normal."