

31 MAY 2002

Mahathir-Message

RESPECT OTHER RACES' RIGHTS, SAYS DR MAHATHIR

KUALA LUMPUR, May 31 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today called on Malaysians to continue to preserve the culture of understanding and respecting the rights of other races to further enhance racial tolerance.

The prime minister said that with such practice the country would continue to be peaceful and the people would live in comfort and security.

"The country can also be run efficiently and many development programmes for the people can be implemented effectively," he said in his message for Gawai Day tomorrow.

He said Malaysia was progressive and prosperous and respected by the rest of the world because of the government's success in developing the people and country with efficiency and vision.

"As a multiracial country, we cannot afford to be disunited because the strength of our people and country depends on every individual," he said.

He said the people should take advantage of the two-day Gawai celebration to visit their friends and hold open house to enhance understanding and promote brotherly ties.

He said Gawai Day, which was celebrated by the Dayaks to mark the start of the harvesting season, was recognised by the Sarawak government as an official ethnic celebration.

"Such celebrations clearly show that the multiracial people have a place in our country although their number may be small and they may be a minority," he said.

Every race had an equal say and their rights were protected just like those of the majority, he added.

Dr Mahathir and his wife, Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamed Ali, also sent greetings to the people of Sabah who celebrated the Keamatan or Harvest Festival today.

In his message, the prime minister said Malaysians should be grateful that they lived in peace and harmony and were free to practise their own religions and customs.

He said the people of various races, religions and customs had enriched the nation with their cultures and this had helped to promote tolerance and respect for each other.

He said they should play a role as responsible Malaysians by maintaining harmony and unity and keeping racial prejudice at bay.

-- BERNAMA

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