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Mahathir-Moderate

MALAYSIA PEACEFUL, ITS PEOPLE MODERATE, SAYS DR MAHATHIR

KAMPAR, Jan 12 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today that Malaysia is a peaceful country and its people are moderate and sensitive to the feelings of other races.

The prime minister said Malaysians abhorred extremism and were prepared to make small sacrifices for the sake of racial unity and national development.

Speaking at the ground-breaking ceremony for Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman's (Utar) main campus here, he said today's ceremony, for example, showed that although the university was owned by the Chinese community, the other races are given places and their cultures were also displayed in the ceremony.

Present were his wife, Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamed Ali, Perak Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Tajol Rosli Ghazali and MCA president Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik.

Dr Mahathir said that peace was very important at a time when the world was facing problems and chaos resulting from terrorist attacks which caused tension among the followers of the different religions, especially between the Muslims and the non-Muslims.

He said that having accepted the fact that Malaysia was a multiracial country, the people were prepared to live together in peace and did not want to see any riots or racial disputes and this had driven Malaysia to become the most developed among the developing countries, he said.

Dr Mahathir said, however, that peace alone was not enough to develop a nation and skills and knowledge were also needed.

"For this, we need facilities like schools and universities. Previously we set a limit on public universities but because of the high demand and the large number of students who had to go overseas to study, we allowed twinning programmes with foreign universities," he said.

Now, the government allowed more private universities to be set up so that all the students had the opportunity to further their studies at a cheaper cost, he said.

"Today we have 17 public and 17 private universities. The establishment of Utar is the result of the rapid growth of the Tunku Abdul Rahman College," he said.

He said he was happy to note that Malaysians, especially those from the Chinese community, were so generous in contributing to the establishment of Utar which would be built on a 520ha site.

Dr Mahathir said the government would give aid to Utar in the form of a launching grant the amount of which would be decided later.

He hoped that the university, which was set up last year, would be able to produce graduates who could contribute to nation building, especially in science and mathematics.

"I also want to thank the Chinese community which places so much importance on education...this is what's behind their success. I was informed that there are now 250,000 from China who are studying overseas," he said.

Dr Mahathir also gave an assurance that he would remain an Umno member and help the Barisan Nasional after he retires.

"Dr Ling and Datuk Tajol praised me just now...but this is not my retirement party. I'm grateful and promise to continue helping in whatever way I can," he said.

He said he would help his successor, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi in all matters pertaining to national development so that Malaysia would continue to enjoy success.

-- BERNAMA

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