

Dr M: Remember Tunku's work

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KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysians must be grateful to the country's first prime minister, Tunku Abdul Rahman, for bringing the major ethnic groups together and making the peaceful Malaysia of today possible, said Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

The former prime minister said it was Tunku who brought the Malays and the Chinese together and enabled them to overcome their suspicions of each other so as to co-operate for the good of both races and the nation's greatness.

He added that Tunku's creation of a coalition of race-based parties that allowed them to work together without losing their identities was a successful formula.

"The racial identities remain but they are pragmatic enough to appreciate the need to co-operate for the common good," he said yesterday in his speech at Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman's (Utar) inaugural convocation at Wisma MCA here.

Dr Mahathir also noted that many Malay parents were sending their children to Chinese schools these days.

He said the reason why they were doing this should be established.

"Is it because they want to learn Chinese or is it because they think Chinese schools are better than national schools?"

"If it is the latter, and many believe it is the latter, then we should look seriously at national schools," he said.

He said a study comparing Chinese schools with national schools should be done, adding that areas to be looked into included finding out if teachers in national school were overburdened.

Dr Mahathir was earlier conferred an honorary doctorate of science by Utar.

Utar council chairman Tun Dr Ling Liong Sik, who presented the honorary degree, said it was in recognition of his outstanding contributions to the

nation, region and world.

"We salute you. We consider the conferment of the honorary degree as the minimum we can do to say 'thank you'," he said.

Dr Mahathir said science was a subject close to his heart and called upon Malaysians to master the subject for the benefit of the country.

"Instead of being recipients and consumers of new technologies, we can actually be inventors and innovators, producing state-of-the-art products for the world," he said.

Dr Mahathir also said although the arts and literature were important, science and technology was essential in helping the nation develop.

"We have to acknowledge that today's world is materialistic and competitive, and we need the skills and knowledge of the sciences, higher mathematics and technology to survive," he said.