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Newspaper	The Sun
Date	24/6/2011

Hug from a distance: Dr M

> Former PM says there's no need for people to assimilate



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PETALING JAYA: Every community must be prepared to give up something if Malaysia is to have stability and prosperity, said former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad (pix).

Acknowledging that this philosophy may not please everyone, he said people do not need to "hug and kiss each other" in order to tolerate and cooperate with each other.

"We don't need to assimilate; we are going to integrate, so the level of hugging and kissing is quite limited. We hug from a distance," he said adding that this is also because Malaysians maintain their own racial identities.

He said this in his keynote address at the Perdana Leadership Foundation Forum 2011 at Sime Darby Convention Centre here yesterday.

Mahathir, who is also president of the foundation, admitted that there were defects in the current race-based political system which the government needs to speedily identify and get rid of.

"In Malaysia, everybody must make sacrifices, nobody will get everything they are entitled to," he said.

"If the Malays want everything that they are entitled to, then there would be nothing left for the Chinese; the same goes for the Chinese and Indians.

"The basic philosophy behind the Malaysian coalition is that every member of a community must be prepared to give up something in order to gain stability and prosperity in the country.

"Race relations in Malaysia is not as good as it was in the days of that 'dictator of 22 years'," Mahathir said, referring to himself.

He claimed that restrictions during his time had kept the country stable, and that it had developed better than other countries that attained independence during the same time.

"In a democracy, we must accept that there is possibility of you losing your position and power.

"If you are willing to accept this then democracy will work, and you will not do all kinds of funny things in order to stay in power," Mahathir said adding that this is the reason why dictators commit crimes - to stay in power as they do not want to be displaced.

The veteran leader, who is known for being critical of Western policies, ironically affirmed the democracy of western leaders who accepted defeat

from the voters, and did not take to the streets just to topple the winner.

He said: "In Malaysia, every time there are elections, the loser invariably holds demonstrations to bring down the winner, which disrupts stability."

"Democracy is when a leader accepts defeat and is willing to give up his power when people decide to vote for

another person," he said.

Mahathir also labelled Malaysian elections as "very destructive" as the political parties are not stable, and this causes a lot of "tremors" to the economy and society.

He said just because there is social and economic transformation taking place it does not mean that we also need to have political transformation.

"Don't change for the sake of changing. We should change only when there is a need, and when there is benefit from the change."

In Malaysia, everybody must make sacrifices, nobody will get everything they are entitled to."