

DR M: MALAY GATHERINGS NOT RACIST

Unacceptable that other ethnic groups can hold meetings, but not Malays, says PM in blog post

KUALA LUMPUR

Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad yesterday said he was saddened that indigenous

people in the country could not have gatherings without being accused of being racist.

He said this in his latest blog posting. "The Malay Dignity Congress", which referred to his recent attendance at a congress of the same name.

He said it was unacceptable that other ethnic groups could have gatherings to discuss their affairs, but not the Malays.

"It cannot be that while other ethnic groups can have gatherings to discuss their affairs, the Malays cannot and that their gathering is racist.

"Now there is even a demand for the Malay initiator of the gathering to be sacked for attending," he posted on chedet.cc.

Dr Mahathir said he was surprised that he was advised not to attend the recent Malay Dignity Congress.

"They are concerned about their (the Malays) possible loss of dignity. As usual, there were extreme views but, overall, they were balanced.

"And, of course, I will be labelled a racist for writing this," said Dr Mahathir, adding that he attended the gathering as he is a Malay too.

The congress on Oct 6 was attended by Pas president Datuk Seri Abdul Hadi Awang, Umno secretary general Tan Sri Annuar Musa, PKR deputy president Datuk Seri Azmin Ali, Parti Amanah Negara president Mo-

hamad Sabu and former ministers Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein and Khairy Jamaluddin.

About 10,000 participants attended the congress, which had since received criticism from various parties.

When citing the history of non-indigenous societies in other countries, Dr Mahathir said when former colonies of European nations gained independence, many of those countries had discriminated against the non-indigenous people.

"Some had to leave the country and some were violently attacked. But not so in this country. The non-indigenous people were accepted as citizens.

"In fact, one million of the non-indigenous people were given citizenship even though they were not qualified."

He said in Malaysia, ethnicity was recognised as legitimate and proper.

"Other multiracial countries see non-indigenous people identifying themselves with the indigenous citizens almost completely.

"They adopt the language and culture of the indigenous people and break their link with their countries of origin. They even change their

names.

"It is a measure of the tolerance of the indigenous people in Malaysia that gatherings, which are confined to the different ethnic groups, are accepted as normal."

He said in a multiracial country, it was common for citizens to retain identification with countries of origin even after being in Malaysia and holding its citizenship for three generations.

"They do not want to lose their racial identities. They manifest this ethnic link through language, culture, schools and ethnic organisations.

They often hold meetings confined to their ethnic group and sometimes, I would be invited to open these meetings and asked to give keynote speeches."

"They are concerned about their (the Malays) possible loss of dignity."

TUN DR MAHATHIR MOHAMAD
prime minister