

Dr M hurt over racist claim

'Other ethnic groups are free to gather to discuss their affairs'

PETALING JAYA: Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who explained that he attended the Malay Dignity Congress as he's a Malay, said he is hurt that they were being accused of being racist for their participation.

"It hurts me to think in their own country the indigenous people are not supposed to have their own gatherings without being accused of being racist.

"And now of course I will be labelled a racist for writing this," he wrote on his blog Chedet.

While other ethnic groups were free to hold gatherings to discuss their affairs, he pointed out that the Malays were accused of being racist when they hold such events.

The Prime Minister also noted

that some critics were calling for the person who had initiated the gathering to be sacked from his post.

He said the indigenous people in Malaysia had shown tolerance when people of different ethnic groups held such gatherings.

"I am therefore very surprised when I was advised not to attend this Malay Congress to discuss their dignity.

"Obviously they are concerned over their possible loss of dignity, whatever that might mean.

"As usual there were extreme views but on the whole they were balanced," he said.

Dr Mahathir said he attended the congress because he was a Malay, and as a Prime Minister he had

been invited to open gatherings held by other ethnic groups.

In multiracial Malaysia, he said ethnicity is recognised as legitimate and proper because non-natives who settled here were free to retain their racial and cultural identity.

"It is common in this multiracial country for the citizens to retain their identification with their 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 their language, culture, schools and ethnic organisations. They often hold meetings confined to their ethnic group," he said.

Dr Mahathir said in other multiracial countries, the non-indigenous citizens "adopt the language and culture of the indigenous people and break their link with their countries of origin. They even change their names".

He said that when former colonies of the European nations gained independence, many had discriminated against the non-indigenous people.

"Some had to leave the country. Some were violently attacked."

"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.