

Understand history to avoid making past mistakes - Dr Mahathir

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PUTRAJAYA, Jan 14 (Bernama) -- Understand history so that past mistakes will not be repeated to ensure peace in the country continues to be preserved, enabling progress to take place and the country's wealth to be distributed fairly, said Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

He said if the three main races in Malaysia, together with the ethnic groups in Sabah and Sarawak could unite to "work", "live" and "play" together, the country could be more advanced.

"For as long as we remember our history and the struggle the country went through, then our country will continue to be peaceful. When it is peaceful, progress can be achieved and wealth can be distributed among all races," he said at the monthly gathering with staff of the Prime Minister's Department, which is the first for this year, here today.

Dr Mahathir said riots that occurred because of racial factor, like in 1969, would not bring any benefit to anyone.

However, he said, although there was no such riot, gap still existed among the races and this was not safe for the country.

Quoting philosopher George Santayana's famous aphorism - "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it" - Dr Mahathir said it was for this reason that everyone, including government officers and politicians, should make it a point to know everything about the country's history.

Malaysia was fortunate because the leaders of all races agreed to jointly develop the country after achieving independence, in contrast with those countries that refused to

accept the presence of people from other countries, he said.

He said that in some countries, those people who regarded themselves as the original inhabitants were uncomfortable with the presence of people whom they labelled as immigrants and, after achieving independence, they forced these so-called immigrants out of their countries.



In some countries without racial problems, he said, the vast gap between the rich and the poor triggered rifts that led to riots.

“We do not want the country to be seen as too rich but the country’s wealth is not distributed fairly among all the races,” he said.

Dr Mahathir said it was for this reason that the government focused its efforts on eradicating poverty especially among the Bumiputeras, many of whom lived in poverty in the rural areas compared with those living in towns with adequate facilities.

“It is our duty to ensure that the country can distribute its wealth equally or at a level that can be accepted by all of society,” he added.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia was fortunate to have achieved independence without having had to go through wars or riots, and the country’s administration was taken over by leaders who had the experience of working with the British colonialists.

He said many countries that were taken over by leaders after victory in wars did not develop well because the leaders did not have the knowledge of administering a country.

“As they do not have experience in administration, we find that these countries are usually not well administered and are often ruled with an iron fist,’ he added.

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