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KUALA LUMPUR, AUG 27 (BERNAMA) -- THE INDEPENDENCE PRESENTLY ENJOYED BY THE COUNTRY CAN BE TAKEN AWAY FROM THE PEOPLE IF THEY TAKE ITS VALUE AND MEANING FOR GRANTED, PRIME MINISTER DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR WARNED TODAY.

MOST CITIZENS TEND TO TAKE INDEPENDENCE FOR GRANTED AFTER A LONG TIME HAD PASSED SINCE IT WAS ACHIEVED, HE SAID AT A DINNER FOR ABOUT 200 PEOPLE WHO FOUGHT AGAINST THE MALAYAN UNION HERE.

HE SAID THAT THE MEANING AND VALUE OF INDEPENDENCE WAS LOOKED UPON HIGHER BY THE PEOPLE WHEN THE COUNTRY FIRST GAINED INDEPENDENCE.

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID IT WAS VITAL FOR A HIGH SPIRIT OF NATIONALISM BE INSTILLED AMONG THE PEOPLE.

HE EXPLAINED THAT NOWADAYS, COLONISATION COULD BE ACHIEVED NOT ONLY THROUGH MILITARY INVASION BUT ALSO THROUGH CULTURE AND THINKING, ADDING THAT A RACE WHICH DID NOT POSSESS ITS OWN CULTURE HAD NO IDENTITY AND NATIONAL SPIRIT. -- MORE
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HE STRESSED THAT A SPIRIT OF NATIONALISM WAS IMPORTANT IN MAINTAINING THE DIGNITY OF THE PEOPLE.

THE PRIME MINISTER REMINDED THE PEOPLE TO GAIN EXPERTISE IN CERTAIN FIELDS TO MAINTAIN THEIR DIGNITY AND SELF-RELIANCE.

+THE PROTON SAGA IS A SYMBOL OF NATIONAL PRIDE AND DIGNITY. IT PROVES THAT WE CAN MANUFACTURE SOMETHING EVEN THOUGH IT IS NOT 100 PER CENT BY US,+ HE ADDED.

HE SAID THE COUNTRY SHOULD NOT BE CONTENT WITH THE NATIONAL CAR BUT INSTEAD ATTEMPT TO CREATE HISTORY IN OTHER FIELDS, SAYING PATRIOTISM WAS VITAL IN ACHIEVING SUCH AMBITIONS.

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID THAT CULTIVATING A SPIRIT OF PATRIOTISM WAS NOT OPPOSED TO RELIGION. -- BERNAMA
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