

Defend national pride, PM tells Malaysians

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KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. — Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad called on all Malaysians to strongly defend their national pride if they did not want to see the country's 28-year-old independence perish.

He said that if the people were not careful, they could be stripped off their independence, not through an armed struggle but through cultural conquest.

"We may think this is impossible, but we should realise there are countries which have already lost their independence in this way," he said at a dinner for 110 anti-Malayan Union fighters hosted by *The New Straits Times Press (M) Bhd* at a hotel here.

The Prime Minister dismissed arguments that culture should not be preserved by the Malays as they were Muslims.

Prevail

"The culture we mean is not that which defies religion but what we want as our own identity," he said.

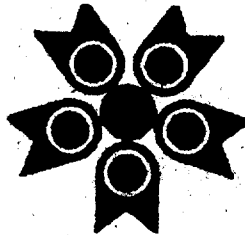
Even the Quran had stated that God created the people in various groups and races and with the idea for them to know one another.

Dr Mahathir said the national spirit and identity must prevail among the people as this would make their position stronger and elicit respect from the rest of the world.

It was because of this realisation that this year's National Day celebration was themed *Nasionalisma Teras Perpaduan* or Nationalism: The basis of Unity.

No one liked to be disrespected and "stepped upon" by others and it was because of this that the people had fought against the British during the pre-independence period, he said.

Dr Mahathir said if the anti-Malayan Union veterans could pass down



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their spirit to the younger generation who had not been colonised, the people would become a respected race in the eyes of the world.

When dinner was over it was "one for album" as the veterans posed for photographs with Dr Mahathir and Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah.