

Mahathir: Don't take our independence for granted

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KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. — Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir cautioned Malaysians today not to take independence for granted because such attitude would eventually cause the country to lose its independence.

He said there had been cases where the independence of a country slipped away due to the lackadaisical attitude of its people in respect to the status.

"We are an independent nation, but it does not mean that independence is ours for keeps.

"The fight to acquire independence is over, but we must fight on to retain the independence so that it does not slip away from us and its significance thins away in the eyes of our youths," he said.

Dr Mahathir was speaking at the Malam Perdana Barisan Penentang Malayan Union at Merlin Hotel. Also present at the dinner were about 124 Malayan Union heroes.

The Prime Minister pointed out that independence, if not cherished, could be taken from us in two ways: power seize and mental/cultural colonisation.

The latter, he said, was the one to watch as it was

the more cunning and was already evident in the country.

He said negative foreign cultural elements were constantly slipping into the national culture in a mutual attempt to corrupt its originality.

"The national culture is the pride of all Malaysians. Once conquered, Malaysia would once again be colonised as it had been before the independence.

"Thus, the rakyat must always arm themselves with the spirits of independence and nationalism and the desire to protect its culture," he said.

Dr Mahathir added that to do so, the rakyat must tread with care in accepting cultural norms and notions which were not their own.

He also urged the older generation, who had experienced the hard life of non-independence, to inject the spirits of nasionalism into the hearts and minds of the younger generation.

Nationalism, he added, was the key factor in realising a long-live independence and unity among Malaysians.

"Hence, the theme for 28th Independence: *Nasionalisma teras Perpaduan.*"