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Tackling sosial ills (HL)

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KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. - Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad called on Malaysians, as they celebrate Hari Raya Aidilfitri, to be conscious of the ills affecting society and seek ways to overcome them.

The Prime Minister hoped that this could lead to everyone helping to combat the moral decline in society.

In his Hari Raya Aidilfitri message, Dr Mahathir said: "On this day, we should be happy because we have successfully overcome our desires. We should celebrate.

"But at the same time we should be conscious and concerned about the ills that beset the Islamic community in this country and, indeed, the whole world. With this realisation and awareness, we may be able to overcome the ills we face and build a noble Islamic society.

"The Government has a role and responsibility to overcome these social problems. But the public - teachers, the media and parents - need to assist the Government.

"Let no one defend bad practices for whatever reason. If we are responsible, we must admit that there is something within us that causes us to be easily defeated by the pressure of living in this age.

"Can this weakness be identified? God willing, after identifying it we may be able to overcome our problems. I hope all of us will ponder on this matter. In our joy of celebrating Hari Raya and our successes, we should not forget our responsibility to combat the moral decline in our society." (See Page 14 for full text of message.)

The Prime Minister also had a reminder to Muslims on this festive occasion. He said they should forget their differences and be ready to offer their hands and to forgive each other.

"On this Hari Raya Aidilfitri, while praising Allah, we could reflect on our actions that causes us to be weak, divided and dominated and oppressed by our enemies.

"Hari Raya and the recitation of praises to Allah would be more meaningful if it makes us feel deeply remorseful and contrite."

As for this year's back-to-back celebrations of Chinese New Year and Hari Raya Aidilfitri, Dr Mahathir noted that the former fell on days when Muslims were still fasting.

The Prime Minister said: "It has become normal for us to visit friends during their respective New Years. Our visits have no religious significance.

"It is only to create good social relations and to help bring about peace and tranquility to our nation. With peace, we are able to live happily and exercise our religious observances without any obstacle.

"On the other hand, we know that in countries where there is no effort to foster good relations, fighting often erupts, even though the people share the same faith. Consequently, religious practices are affected.

"Therefore, it is important that we continue to do things that have always benefitted us. I hope Malaysian Muslims will not stop visiting their Chinese friends during the Chinese New Year, not to eat and drink during the day time when we fast, but to contribute towards creating a favourable climate for our nation."

(END)