

29 JAN 1998

Mahathir-Message

CLOSE RANKS IN DEFENCE OF COUNTRY, MALAYSIANS URGED

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 29 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has called on all communities, groups and associations to close ranks in defence of the country during the current economic downturn.

"We know there are attempts to recolonise us. The fight against colonisation by foreigners is the responsibility of all Malaysians," he said in his Hari Raya message over radio and television tonight.

He said it was unfortunate that there were people and groups taking advantage of the current economic problems to promote their politics and groups.

"We are a democratic country where we respect the voice of the majority while the minority too is free to express its views. The Malaysian government is elected by the people and given the mandate to govern until another election."

"The democratic practice is for our own good and we should not become victims just to show how demoractic we are to the extent of being recolonialised by foreigners," he said.

Dr Mahathir said outsiders talked so much about democracy but on the other hand they were not ashamed in forcing a democratically elected government to accept their bidding.

"They feel that they are responsible for disciplining elected governments in other countries."

"If these governments do not follow their biddings, various financial and economic pressures are imposed on such governments and their peoples," he said.

He said pressuring the people was in fact one way of forcing the government concerned to follow their biddings.

"We must realise the great danger facing our country. If we are not careful we will be recolonised and it would be no less better."

"Our efforts to regain our pride fully will be gone. And this time, we might not be able to regain it," he said.

While hoping that the people would face the economic problems patiently, he reminded them that it was not the time to fight for self interest or for the individual community or party.

He said that if there was disunity and efforts were ineffective to overcome the economic problem, the country's economic situation would deteriorate further allowing outsiders to control the country.

"Trust me, our fate will be worse including that of people who try to take advantage of the problems being faced by the country," he said.

However, Dr Mahathir said due to strong support of the majority of the people and the efforts taken by the government to build strong foundation, the country's administration was better managed without influence from any groups wanting to use the power of the government in an unwise way.

He said in conjunction wit the Hari Raya Puasa, the people should be thankful that they were still able to celebrate the occasion in an atmosphere of peace although the country was facing an economic downturn as the result of the depreciation of the ringgit against the US dollar.

As the Quran says those who know how to be grateful would reap greater benefits, he said.

"God willing our problem could be resolved and we will be back again as before but wiser against challenges in the future.

"If we know how to manage our life, we will not feel the depreciation

of the ringgit," he said.

He reiterated his call to the people to reduce the use of foreign goods or substitute them with locally made goods which were cheaper.

Dr Mahathir said considering that the Hari Raya Puasa was celebrated almost at the same time of the Chinese New Year, the opportunity should be taken to foster good relationship between the two biggest communities in the country.

"Our ability to celebrate our festivities together show our understanding in tackling community relations problem in our country," he said. --BERNAMA

NZ ABG AAM