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Mahathir-Blessings

MALAYSIANS SHOULD COUNT BLESSINGS FOR BEING FORTUNATE

KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 18 (Bernama) -- All Malaysians should count their blessings for being fortunate to be able to live in peace and harmony, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

He said the people should also work for continued peace and stability in the country to enable the smooth and effective implementation of the economic recovery measures.

"We should count our blessings for all that we have achieved and we should remind ourselves that our country is peaceful as well as bountiful," he said at a meeting with the heads of Felda (land settlement) schemes.

The meeting, held at the Felda headquarters here, was attended by about 1,500 heads of settlements from throughout the country.

Dr Mahathir said the people of Malaysia should also realise that there are foreign attempts at re-colonising the country by impoverishing it through efforts such as weakening the economy and depreciating the ringgit.

The Prime Minister also recounted the hardships of the colonial era and reminded the people that if foreign powers were to re-colonise the country, all the riches of the country would be taken away.

He said since achieving independence, the government has strove to distribute the country's riches back to the people by providing various amenities and improving the standard of living.

When the economic crisis started, he said the government too came under pressure but it has strove diligently to overcome the crisis with the setting up of the National Economic Action Council (NEAC) and implementing various economic recovery measures.

"I hope, in the current economic crisis, our country will remain peaceful and that there will not be many problems," said Dr Mahathir.

He said the government was also fortunate as workers in the country have not gone on strikes and despite the rise in prices of essential items, the rise has not been too steep and remained under control.

He said it was unfortunate that a political problem arose at a time when the country was facing an economic crisis.

"I did not pick for a political crisis to happen when we are facing an economic crisis. I have no option. I have the responsibility of ensuring that one who will lead must be of good character, sincere and honest," he said.

Dr Mahathir said he found his former deputy, Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, not qualified to continue leading the country and thus had to be removed from office.

He said certain quarters could not accept Anwar's sacking and they had caused rioting to occur as well as accusing the government of being unjust.

"He caused the rioting and he seemed to be aided by foreigners such as Americans who have interfered in our domestic affairs," he said.

"The United States does not like me to be the Prime Minister of Malaysia and when the services of the deputy prime minister (Anwar) was ended, it got angry, came and supported the move to topple the government."

Dr Mahathir said the government of this country could be changed but only through elections and the people of Malaysia will determine it.

He said Malaysians must stay united and to fight against any form of colonization attempted by foreign parties.

"We need to be aware that foreigners wished to re-colonise us. A

misundersanding among ourselves is a different matter but to fight colonization, we must be united," he said.

The Prime Minister, who also spoke of the fate of several other Islamic countries with problems due to pressure exerted by the United States, reminded Muslims here to hold true to the teachings of Islam.

As for the Felda settlers, Dr Mahathir said they should be thankful as no other government in the world had been successful in opening up 800,000 ha of jungle land to be developed into plantations and to provide income to the settlers.

He said hundreds of thousands of people without income and land hungry have been given land to be worked on for income and that many children of the settlers now have a professional career.

He added other developing countries had tried to come up with land schemes similar to Malaysia's but they had not been very successful due to the lack of an efficient management.

-- BERNAMA

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