

21 JAN 1998

Mahathir-Donors

NATIONAL RESILIENCE CAN OVERCOME PRESSURE, SUBJUGATION- DR MAHATHIR

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 21 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad is confident that a united people willing to face challenges and making donations irrespective of one's religion will enable Malaysia to withstand pressure and overcome attempts to subjugate the nation.

The Prime Minister said such conduct was synonymous with national resilience and this was amply demonstrated when the people continued to donate even during the current economic slowdown to help the needy irrespective of religion.

"Insya-Allah so long as we retain these noble values in us, we can overcome pressure and attempts to subjugate the country once more," he said at the presentation of Hari Raya gifts and school aid to orphans here tonight.

At the function, the Prime Minister's wife Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamed Ali handed over aid to some 400 orphans from the Federal Territory who received RM140 each and school aid of between RM200 and RM250 each donated by the Federal Territory Islamic Orphans Welfare Association.

Dr Mahathir, expressing gratitude over and over again, said Malaysians had the spirit of donating without any form of religious discrimination as non-Muslims also gave donations for the building of mosques and so on.

Dr Mahathir said Muslims also donated to non-Muslims and this would definitely further strengthen relations between the two communities.

He said Malaysia had been able to reduce the poverty rate to seven per cent and was striving to achieve developed status and increase the people's income but there were attempts to ensure that "we do not achieve that status."

"It appears that our efforts to improve our wellbeing have been thwarted by foreigners by causing the ringgit's value to fall and make us poor once more ...we have yet to catch up with them but they have acted to ensure that we do not catch up at all," Dr Mahathir said.

Dr Mahathir said foreigners were alleging that the problems being faced by Malaysia were due to the government practising favouritism and being involved in corruption and so on.

"I am not saying there is no favouritism and corruption, perhaps there is some...but the fact is we have succeeded in developing our country, succeeded in eradicating poverty and succeeded in helping the have-nots."

"This shows that our method, though having its weaknesses, has not had too bad an effect on the country but instead had brought positive results," he said.

The Prime Minister said they would cause further fall in the value of the ringgit to make Malaysia suffer when Malaysia said something which they did not like.

Other countries were also facing such action and there were some who had nearly become rich but were now nearly bankrupt and there were countries facing threats with nearly two million people being unemployed.

At the function, Dr Mahathir, who is a life-member of the association received donations including from a non-Muslim.

The Prime Minister later joined the gathering in breaking the fast. Also present was Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Dr Abdul Hamid Othman. -- BERNAMA

MNY AAM