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Mahathir-message

UNITY IS KEY TO A SUCCESSFUL RECOVERY, SAYS MAHATHIR

KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 31 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said that preserving the prevailing stability, peace and the cooperation among Malaysians is the key to ensuring the success of Malaysia's economic recovery which is gradually gaining momentum with encouraging results.

In his new year message, Dr Mahathir said that 1999, the final year of the second millennium and the 20th century, is poised to test the resilience of Malaysians and as such they should be prepared to take on the challenges.

"InsyaAllah (God willing), if we persevere, if we preserve the stability and peace in the country and if we work together to carry out the strategies for recovery which we have planned together, we'll achieve success and give continued meaning to our independence," he said.

In his message, aired over Radio Television Malaysia tonight, Dr Mahathir said although 1998 was a problem-ridden year, it was also a year of successes for the country.

The year saw the opening of the KL International Airport, reputedly the world's most beautiful and most modern airport, the National Sports Complex and the completion of the world's tallest building, the Petronas Twin Towers.

Dr Mahathir also defended these projects against criticisms that they were a big waste of funds, saying they were erected at a time when the country had much ringgit and that its value was higher then.

If these projects were to be built now, they would easily cost 50 per cent more following the ringgit's depreciation, he said.

"In fact, the decision to build them before the economic slowdown sets in was coincidentally a wise one. Otherwise, today we may not be able to have these facilities at all.

"These facilities are in fact vital infrastructure to meet the need of a rapidly developing country. Foreigners who have been criticising us are in fact jealous of us," said Dr Mahathir.

"As Malaysians we deserved to be proud of our triumphant performance in 1998, including our athletes," he said referring to Malaysia's hosting of the 16th Commonwealth Games and winning 10 gold medals.

He said it was obvious that not all of the events of 1998 were catastrophes and Malaysians should be thankful for the achievements attained throughout the year.

Dr Mahathir also said Malaysians were fortunate that as they were coming to terms with the world situation today and face the more challenging 21st century, the country's administration was not weakened to require assistance from foreign capitalists.

"Hence we're still independent and remain in control of the situation in our country," he said.

Dr Mahathir however reminded Malaysians to continue to be vigilant against enemies out to re-colonise the country.

Certain powers would use whatever weapons and equipment they have to divide Malaysians and take control of the country, he said.

"Their leaders, media, traders, international agencies, rating agencies, and banks will resort to whatever means to achieve the objective," said Dr Mahathir.

To achieve their own ends, he said, these groups would hurl all sorts

of accusations that Malaysia lacked a transparent government, was practising crony-capitalism, ignoring the rule of law, undemocratic and did not heed the demands of street protesters.

"But these accusations against us would fit them better and are more appropriate for them actually," said Dr Mahathir stressing that these powers were the very people practising what they had accused Malaysia of.

He said those accusing the Malaysian government of ignoring the demands of the street protesters were themselves insensitive to demonstrations condemning air strikes on Iraq and atrocities against innocent and defenseless adults and children.

"They are just like cockerels crowing arrogantly but with their tail feathers mired in faeces," he said.

"Let them crow. It is us the Malaysian people, the Malaysian nation that will determine our recovery in the decent way," said Dr Mahathir.

Dr Mahathir said outsiders would not cease trying to destroy the Malaysian economy by scaring away not only the investors but also the tourists through adverse reports.

The prime minister said it was crucial that the Malaysia Incorporated concept, which emphasised cooperation between the government, workers and the private sector, be adhered to in handling eventualities.

"This concept has led us to success before and we are convinced that it will again lead us to a similar path this time around," said Dr Mahathir.

He said economic recovery efforts would require support from all Malaysians by way of them preserving the prevailing peace and harmony.

Dr Mahathir said foreign powers and their media may try again to spark off riots in the country.

"Therefore we have to be on the alert. Let's not deceive ourselves into believing that outsiders have good intentions when they incite our people to riot purportedly to achieve justice by bypassing democracy, rioting and bringing down a government elected by the people," the prime minister added.

-- BERNAMA

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