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Mahathir-Deepavali

DEEPAVALI SHOULD MORE MORE CHEERFUL THIS YEAR, SAYS MAHATHIR

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 6 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today he hopes that Malaysians will strive to ensure that tolerance is practised and inculcated to preserve racial harmony and the well-being of the nation.

In his message in conjunction with Deepavali to be celebrated tomorrow, he said that the people should take heed and be grateful for the benefits they enjoy as Malaysians.

The prime minister said that the Deepavali celebrations this year should be more cheerful compared to two years ago as Malaysia had been freed of the economic crisis which hit the region in 1997.

He said that the people should be proud that all measures taken to defend the economy from the manipulation of currency traders and market speculators had been initiated by Malaysia on its own.

"Many have predicted that the country will be doomed following the capital control measures that we introduced.

"But it is clear that their claims and predictions are completely wrong and the measures taken by the government have instead been successful in dealing with the economic crisis to the extent that those who have criticised us have to admit that we have succeeded," he said.

Dr Mahathir said that the government had managed to defend the nation and the people from destruction at a time when some other countries faced a bleak situation following attacks on their economies.

"Riots, racial tensions, food shortage and unemployment...all these happened within a short period and were widespread," he said, referring to the effects of the economic crisis in some other countries.

The prime minister hoped that the people would join those celebrating the Deepavali to further promote goodwill among the various races in the country.

His wife, Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamed Ali, joined him in wishing Hindus in Malaysia a "Happy Deepavali".

Meanwhile, Gerakan president Datuk Seri Dr Lim Keng Yaik, in his message, said Malaysians were a unique example to the world with their tolerance, understanding and open-minded society, which had enabled the country to enjoy peace, prosperity, stability and harmony.

"Malaysians should never forget their uniqueness as Malaysians -- a result of the convergence of diverse influences of the varied cultures in the country," he said, urging the people to always safeguard against factors within or outside the country that could have adverse effects on their uniqueness.

He said with the combined support and cooperation of all Malaysians and an able leadership, the country had managed to progress quickly into a developing nation from an agrarian state, and was recognised internationally for its feats.

However, Gerakan urged all Malaysians not to rest on their laurels and instead strive harder towards a fair, just, progressive and democratic country as envisioned in Vision 2020.

"In wishing all Hindus a Happy Deepavali, Gerakan fervently prays for the goodwill, prosperity, peace and harmony for the Hindu faithfuls as well as Malaysians of other faiths," he added.

-- BERNAMA

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