

18 JAN 1999

Raya Message-Mahathir

DO NOT FRUSTRATE ECONOMIC RECOVERY EFFORTS, SAYS DR MAHATHIR

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 18 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad tonight asked Malaysians not to try and frustrate the government's economic recovery efforts but instead to strive harder to revive all economic activities in the country.

He said Malaysians generally stood solidly behind the government and this had foiled efforts by certain groups to destroy the Malaysian economy and force the country to bow to their demands.

"I believe that if all citizens are of one heart and purpose, our country will return to its original strong economic position within a short period," he said in his Hari Raya Aidilfitri message over radio and television.

He commended Malaysians for being highly disciplined and patient in facing the economic slowdown and not panicking or losing their sense of direction but working hard to increase the national income and revive the economy.

Expressing confidence that the economic problems would abate by the turn of the century, Dr Mahathir said there was an increased possibility now of overcoming these woes as the government had succeeded in freeing the national economy from the pressures of currency traders and foreign share speculators.

He said the government was vested with powers under the Constitution and the law to protect the people and country from any threat and through these powers it had been able to regain control of the value of the ringgit by restricting its sale and purchase by currency traders.

Dr Mahathir said even though the country's economic position was still affected it had not made the Aidilfitri celebrations any less joyous as Malaysians were a rational and calm lot, not easily incited.

He stressed the importance of Muslims in Malaysia preserving peace and order in the country.

"For if there are racial riots in Malaysia, Muslims also will become victims and may become weak and be controlled by others," he said.

Dr Mahathir also urged Malaysians to cooperate with one another for their mutual progress and not damage the country through the pursuit of self interest.

He urged the people, particularly Muslims, to grasp every opportunity made available by the government so as to not only bring progress to their race and nation but also to restore the glory of Islam in the eyes of the world.

"We cannot just fold our arms and stand and stare while others march along in line with the world's progress. We cannot be satisfied with our achievements and success attained so far."

"We cannot allow others to always be ahead of us. Others should try to keep up with us and not we try to keep up with others," Dr Mahathir said.

He said that if Muslims wished to restore the glorious era of Islam, they should, among other things, be smart enough to apportion their time for religious studies and studies in other fields.

He said that with globalisation and the elimination of borders to facilitate capital movements, Muslims and their countries would be exposed to very big dangers.

"If Muslims continue to have conflicts among themselves, reject acquiring modern technology and knowledge and remain disorganised, they

will not be able to overcome these big dangers," he said.

Dr Mahathir slammed certain Islamic nations for colluding with the enemies of Islam and eroding their wealth by acquiring foreign-made weapons to defeat other Islamic countries.

"Hence this is the reason we Muslims cannot blame only Islam's enemies. Muslims are no less at fault because they do not follow Islamic teachings like the need to acquire knowledge and to be united," he said.

He said that if there was a single Muslim country which was recognised as a world power, surely no other power in the world would oppress Muslims and other Islamic countries according to its whims and fancies.

Dr Mahathir said even though Malaysia was unlikely to become a super power, it had in some way contributed to the defence of Muslims, for instance, by sending its military personnel to Bosnia Herzegovina which had raised the spirit of Muslims who had been attacked by Serbs.

"This is clear proof that a little effort on our part is enough for us to act effectively to protect Muslims."

"If all Muslims strive even a little bit, the effect will be enough to protect Muslims the world over," he said.

-- BERNAMA

MAM AAM