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Mahathir-Christmas

MEANINGFUL CHRISTMAS FOR MALAYSIANS WITH IMPROVING ECONOMY, SAYS PM

KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 24 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said Malaysia's recovery from the crippling economic crisis of 1997 gives special significance to Malaysians celebrating the last Christmas of the century tomorrow.

The economic turnaround would also add to the rejoicing of Christians as they usher the new millennium, the prime minister said in his customary Christmas message.

"We should be thankful that Malaysians at large have been spared from undesirable consequences," he said referring to the devastation that wrecked some countries as an aftermath of the economic crisis, including ethnic and religious violence.

Christmas celebrations in Malaysia have always been joyous because of the strong racial and religious harmony which was not all jeopardised by the economic crisis, Dr Mahathir said.

The prime minister said Malaysia, adopting its own measures, including capital controls, had warded off attacks on the stock and currency markets by foreign manipulators.

"Although others mostly belittle our capabilities, we've proven that with conviction we can accomplish whatever we set out to do.

"We should be proud of our capabilities. We had no need for foreign interference or tutelage in determining our destiny," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the people's solid support made the government all the more determined to strive for greater national advancement and safeguard the country from attempts to negate its achievements.

"Clearly, the steps taken by the government to narrow the progress gap between communities have been fruitful and have effectively diminished the possibility of racial tension arising from economic disparity," he said.

The prime minister urged Malaysians to visit one another saying that although Muslims are observing Ramadan and could not enjoy daytime meals they could still call on Christians friends in the spirit of yuletide.

Dr Mahathir and wife Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamed Ali wished Christians a merry Christmas.

-- BERNAMA

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