

19/01/1999

PM: Don't disrupt recovery efforts (HL)

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KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad tonight urged Malaysians to ensure peace and harmony and not resort to actions which would undermine the Government's ongoing efforts to maintain economic recovery.

Dr Mahathir said it was because of their unity and support for the Government that attempts by certain groups to destroy the Malaysian economy and force the Government to bow to their demands, had failed.

"In actual fact, Malaysians are very disciplined and patient in facing the current economic problems. They don't easily panic or become lost.

"They are willing to sacrifice and work hard to increase productivity and the country's revenue so that the economy can be revived," he said in his Hari Raya Aidilfitri message aired over Radio Televisyen Malaysia and TV3.

Dr Mahathir said the New Economic Policy was successful in ensuring equal distribution of wealth among the races.

"As such, the current economic problems have not resulted in us losing our minds, rioting or acting wildly," he said.

Dr Mahathir said if all citizens were of one heart and purpose, Malaysia would return to its strong economic position within a short period.

Expressing confidence that the economic problems would be overcome by the turn of the century, Dr Mahathir said the possibility had increased because the Government had succeeded in freeing the national economy from the pressures of currency traders and foreign share speculators.

He said with the powers vested in the Government by the Constitution and the law, it had been able to protect the people and country from any threat.

"With these powers, the Government has been able to regain control of the value of the ringgit by restricting its sale and purchase by currency traders," he said.

Dr Mahathir said although the country was not as prosperous as before because of the economic problems, it had not made the Aidilfitri celebrations less joyous.

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

He urged Muslims not to make enemies of one another, saying that this would not only be detrimental to the country's progress but also the Muslim world as a whole.

Dr Mahathir said unlike in other countries, Muslims in Malaysia were able to celebrate Hari Raya in prosperity and a peaceful environment, without fear of being hit with bombs and rockets.

Saying Malaysian Muslims should be thankful for being able to do so, Dr Mahathir called on them to show their appreciation with actions which reflected their sincerity.

"If we just say in our hearts that we are thankful, but resort to actions that will weaken the Muslims and expose them to oppression, our thanksgiving will have no meaning whatsoever," he said.

Dr Mahathir said making enemies of one another, causing riots within the Muslim community, preventing their development and their ability to pursue knowledge and skills, were examples of ungratefulness.

He urged the people, particularly Muslims, to grab every opportunity made available by the Government to not only bring progress to their race

and nation but also to restore the Islamic glory.

"We cannot just fold our arms and stare while others march along in progress. We cannot be satisfied with our achievements and success so far.

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

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

"If Muslims continue to have conflicts among themselves, reject modern technology and knowledge and remain disorganised, they will not be able to overcome such dangers," he said.

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

"This is the reason why we Muslims cannot blame only the enemies of Islam. Muslims are no less at fault because they do not follow Islamic teachings such as the need to acquire knowledge and to be united," he said.

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

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