

09/09/2000

Ling: We're committed to peace

Patvinder Singh

KUALA LUMPUR, Fri.- Malaysia is committed to peace-keeping efforts around the world as the country knows the sufferings brought by conflict, having been occupied during the Second World War and later experiencing the Communist insurgency, Transport Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik said today.

He said the war years and the insurgency also had the effect of strengthening the sense of nationalism among all the then Malaysians.

"The bitter war experience caused many to realise they should have their own independent nation whose destiny would be decided and defended by its citizens.

"This independent nation would then play its part in contributing to international peace and to make the world a safer place for its children and for their children's children.

"That is the regional and international role which a free and independent Malaysia is playing today," Dr Ling, who is also MCA president, said in his speech at the opening of the Kuala Lumpur War and Peace Exhibition at the Loke Mansion in Medan Tuanku.

The exhibition, which is on until Oct 15, is organised by the Limkokwing Institute of Creative Technology.

It is open from 10am to 5pm daily and admission is free.

Dr Ling said Malaysia had played an important and responsible role in the United Nations peace-keeping operations.

"Since its first mission in Congo in 1960, Malaysian forces have served in Cambodia, Bosnia, Somalia and now in East Timor.

"We are committed to peace-keeping because we in this country know fully well the sufferings which conflict brings," he said.

Dr Ling told his audience that many of them were not born or were too young to remember the war years.

However, he said the generation that endured the sufferings of the Second World War was still around.

"Its members still have vivid and painful memories. But they are slowing passing from the scene.

"Soon there will be no more first-hand accounts or recollections," Dr Ling said.

He said it was therefore important that those accounts be recorded and that scenes of war and peace be re-captured in paintings and contemporary photographs for only then would memories live on to tell a story and offer a cautionary tale.

"There must be constant reminders of the folly and mistakes that caused conflict and of the terrible human costs they inflict upon society.

"Only then will the sad lessons of war be learned," Dr Ling said.

Later at a Press conference, he was asked to comment on Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's National Day message.

Dr Ling said in a multi-racial country, the mass media had a lot of responsibility because the media, be they Malay, Chinese, English or Tamil, must always be guided by certain principles.

"And one of the main things in playing their roles is they should always be asking themselves are we building a nation, are we engendering peace and stability or we are inflaming emotions to destroy.

"A lot of media, wittingly or unwittingly, tend to inflame emotions rather than douse them.

Tending to light rather than douse," he said.

Dr Ling said in a multi-racial society, there were issues that were sensitive to certain ethnic groups.

He added and it was the responsibility of all to not raise the sensitivities in improper places and in ways that could be misunderstood by the people.

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