

Defend unity formula, says Mahathir

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KUALA LUMPUR: Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has urged the people to discard all demands that are racial in nature and to defend the formula for unity which was worked out by the country's founders so that Vision 2020 can be realised.

"At the start of this new year and millennium, let us all set aside demands which could not possibly be accepted by the multi-racial society; let's return to the moderation and tolerance which have brought peace and prosperity to us and our country," he said.

If the people continued to adhere to the formula which was worked out half a century ago, Vision 2020 would become a reality, he said in his New Year message which was aired over RTM last night.

He said there was no need for Malaysia to set a new policy or formula to ensure the country's stability, peace and progress.

It was clear that the formula worked out by the country's founders — Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra, Tun Tan Siew Sin and Tun V.T. Sambanthan — and which was adopted and adapted by Sarawak and Sabah leaders, had proven very effective for

Malaysia, he said.

"In view of its success, do we want to abandon it and set a new formula on the demands of any quarter which claims the formula which we have been practising for 43 years is unfair and favours a certain race only?"

"Are we willing to jeopardise our country's stability and progress and maybe destroy our future because certain quarters wish to get all that they demand for?"

Dr Mahathir said the formula that was adopted was effective and could be used with minimal sacrifice by the people, and "although there are minor defects, they are no more than those found in any other country in the world."

He said the May 13 riots in 1969 broke out because not all the people understood the wisdom of the country's founders.

That experience prompted the leaders at that time to formulate more effective policies to give meaning to the understanding reached by the country's founders, he said.

He said the "give-and-take" concept of co-operation established by the country's founding fathers was so effective that many within and outside the country tried to copy it.

"But the imitation we see in

the country does not have the same sincerity and intention. Like the comedians say, they sleep on the same pillow but have different dreams. The original practitioners of the concept of inter-racial cooperation have a common ambition, that is to be fair to all. People who desire stability and prosperity for the country can surely differentiate between a piece of glass and gem," he said.

"In a multi-racial society, if imbalance gets too bad, there will inevitably be tensions and racial riots and if riots occur, those making demands would not only fail to get what they sought but may lose what they already possessed, and all of us will then be big losers," he said.

Dr Mahathir said certain quarters tried to achieve their demands by armed rebellion and committed acts which the country had never seen before when they captured, tortured and murdered people whose religions were different from theirs.

"They have forgotten that the Malayan communist terrorists tried for 43 years (1948-1990) to topple the Malaysian government but failed. Do they believe that with their small group they can succeed?

Are they confident that the people will support their violence?" Dr Mahathir said.

On the contrary, the majority of Malaysians irrespective of race and religion were moderate people who wanted peace so that they could live comfortably and go about their work and business without disruptions, he said.

The Prime Minister said in a democracy the people were the judge and they themselves would feel the effect and outcome of their decisions.

"As the judge, the people must be calm and make assessments with an open mind. Sentiments and emotions cannot be allowed to influence the considerations of a judge.

"Feeling angry for no reason will not possibly result in a wise decision. Mistakes in judgment will have to be borne by the judge. When the country is damaged, rehabilitating it is very difficult," he said.

Dr Mahathir also touched on the country's rapid development in its 43 years of independence which had placed it on the world map.

He said although there were groups which did not get special treatment, their progress actually exceeded the set targets because the advancement

of people who are smart, hard-working and who possessed capital could not be restricted.

"As such, they continue to progress rapidly and achieve their share earlier. On the other hand, the weak group continue to lag far behind and have yet to meet the target set for them, although this target is lower than their percentage," he said.

He said the New Economic Policy had reduced the gap to a certain extent and because of this the recent economic downturn did not spark racial riots as happened in several other countries.

The prime minister said the success achieved by Malaysia was not something ordinary because it was very difficult to develop a multi-racial country whose various races were at different levels of development.

"This is because development must be accompanied by attempts to balance the progress of all races so that no one would feel marginalised and left behind. These efforts need to be done without seizing the wealth of any race for distribution to the poor races. Instead, distribution should be done from an expanded economic pie."

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