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Mahathir-Threats

ALWAYS BE PREPARED TO DEFEND THE COUNTRY, SAYS PM

MELAKA, May 5 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today reminded the people to refrain from being too comfortable with what have been achieved through the country's independence as this can cause them to be less prepared in defending the country from external threats.

He said the country had been independent for 43 years but this was not a long time that the people need no longer give attention to the struggles to develop the nation.

"Unfortunately, it appears as if all the struggles are over...there's no need to bother anymore, thought no longer needs to be given to development and defence.

"It's worrying if there's a thinking that once we have achieved independence, we will remain independent forever that we fail to defend our country," he said at a special gathering of commandos at the Sungai Udang Camp here.

He said that Malaysia should be prepared to resist the new form of colonialism, that of the economy by foreigners brought about through the concept of globalisation and the borderless world.

Unlike the Eastern culture, he said, it was the Western and European culture to conquer and to covet what belonged to others.

The prime minister spoke at length on the challenges of globalisation and the need for the people to be prepared and united in facing them as well as various aspects on the defence of the country.

He said that the security and defence forces should readily accept changes and respond to new approaches.

"If we are not prepared to accept anything new, we will lose out. As such, it is essential that we accept new approaches and be aware that the world is ever changing," he said.

Dr Mahathir cited how a small Portuguese force had succeeded in conquering the Melaka empire in 1511 merely because the huge Melaka force lacked discipline and an effective approach in facing the enemy.

"The small Portuguese force was disciplined and when an order was given, they moved as a team whereas the Melaka soldiers, indisciplined and untrained to defend themselves, failed to move as a team," he said.

As such, he said, the country's security forces had been provided with various equipment besides training to defend the country.

Dr Mahathir said that government employees must possess a high degree of discipline to form a strong team in developing the country because without discipline all programmes drawn up would not achieve their objective.

However, he said, they should not have blind courage and determination to the point of disregarding their safety and that of the country.

"Those who are brave will seek ways to defeat the enemy but avoid from becoming the target instead of confronting the enemy but lacking in preparedness and endangering themselves," he said.

As such, Dr Mahathir called on the people to always be cautious in all their undertakings and not resort to actions that could weaken the country, allowing foreigners to take advantage of such weaknesses.

"Our task is to defend and uphold the dignity of the country...not only to stay resilient up to 2020 but to remain free and independent forever," he said.

Speaking to reporters later, Dr Mahathir said that the government was seeking ways to encourage more non-Bumiputera in the country to join the security forces especially the military.

"We are seeking ways for them (non-Bumiputera) to join our security forces but their participation must be at all levels. They cannot just become officers and not join the rank and file...they'll also have to join the rank and file.

"(If) they also regard Malaysia as their own country, they have the right to join the military defending the country, sacrificing their lives as this is their country...the non-Bumiputera must adopt the same attitude. If we wish to have a good life in our country, we should be prepared to defend it," he said.

Asked why not many non-Bumiputera are interested to join the security forces, he said: "(They) say the salary is small...we cannot pay different salaries to different races. So we see countries whose citizens are required to do national service for two years...we can have national service for those who do not join.

"We have adequate number of Bumiputera, so if we have national service maybe it'll be among the non-Bumiputera...we have adequate number of personnel in terms of force strength," he said.

As such, the prime minister called on the non-Bumiputera to display patriotism and spirit of nationalism by joining the security forces.

Asked on the proposal to provide allowance to military personnel awarded galantry awards, he said that the matter was being considered by the government.

"We are considering (the allowance). We want to be fair to everyone...if there is a basis, we will not hesitate in providing appropriate payment.

"We will consider...on my own I do not have the right to make the decision," he said.

Present at the assembly were Chief Minister Datuk Wira Mohamed Ali Rustam, Defence Minister Datuk Seri Mohamed Najib Razak and Deputy Defence Minister Datuk Shafie Apdal.

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