

31 DEC 2001

Mahathir-Message (Stability)

APPRECIATE COUNTRY'S ACHIEVEMENTS, PM TELLS MALAYSIANS

KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 31 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said Malaysians should not only take pride in the country's stability and progress but also appreciate them.

The people should not regard the country's stability and development as something normal that would continue forever without any effort, he said in his New Year message.

"Don't let's take for granted what is available in our country. The success in Malaysia was achieved through policies, planning and efforts that took into account the sensitivities of the various races in the country, the human and natural resources situation, and the limited sources of wealth that we inherited," he said.

Dr Mahathir said that in today's world, the losers were not only left behind but also cruelly victimised.

"This civilisation of the 21st century of the third millennium is still the primitive civilisation of the Stone Age.

"Whoever is able to easily kill in large numbers in a short time, they are the ones who are right. Their correctness is hailed by the media and the NGOs controlled by them. This is the modern world that we are faced with," he said.

The Prime Minister said that although Malaysia was still weak, it was not humiliated or made use of by others.

"We probably won't be able to beat them but if we are smart, if we are able to set up a country with certain ability, if we know how far we can go, we will probably be able to protect and retain our freedom, our dignity," he said.

Touching on the Sept 11 terrorist attack on the United States, Dr Mahathir said Malaysia joined other countries in condemning the action and other acts of terror as terrorism was not the way to solve any problem.

He said Malaysia opposed the US-led military action in Afghanistan out of fear that innocent people would become victims, and hoped that peace and stability would return to Afghanistan as soon as possible.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia was also against similar military action in any other Islamic country and wanted to see the attacks against Palestinians by Israel stopped.

"We don't see this as a clash of civilisations. Muslims and non-Muslims in Malaysia do not view the events that have taken place as a clash between Islam and Christianity," he added.

Dr Mahathir said that following the Sept 11 incident, Malaysia was acknowledged by many countries as an Islamic nation holding firmly to the moderate form of true Islamic teachings.

"Here, the rule of law could be practised. Although the majority of the people are Muslims and they could grasp power just for themselves and deny the rights of people of other races and religions, it does not happen," he said.

This, he said, was proof that there can be a Muslim state with the rights of non-Muslims well protected and the people of various religions living in harmony.

Turning to another subject, Dr Mahathir said the government was disappointed that efforts to balance the pursuit of knowledge among the races in the country did not achieve the success envisaged by the New Economic Policy (NEP).

He said initially the Bumiputeras, who were left behind in education and skills, made good use of the preference given to them under the NEP.

However, certain quarters with vested political interests incited Bumiputera students not to study hard or seek admission to university.

"The aim of these inciters is to bring the Muslims under their control. They fear that if the Muslims become smart and can think, they will question the leadership of this group and reject them," he said.

The Prime Minister said many Malay students at present refused to learn other subjects besides Islamic teachings because they believed the other subjects would not make them good Muslims.

This also explained why the proportion of male students in local universities was only half that of female students, he said.

"The grades of male students are lower because they don't study hard," he said.

Dr Mahathir said all the facilities given to Bumiputeras, especially Malays, had turned out to be a waste.

"If the Malays do not wish to pursue knowledge, the country will have to depend on non-Malays.

"The Malays should not be angry or disappointed if important positions in the country are held by non-Malays, if wealth and prosperity are enjoyed by non-Malays," he said.

The Prime Minister said the Malays would have themselves to blame if they were backward in this country.

What was sad, he added, was that 99 percent of Muslims in Malaysia were Malays which meant that a decline of the Malays was also a decline of Muslims.

Dr Mahathir said various proposals were still being made by Bumiputeras to improve the economic status.

"But we know that the implementation of all these proposals and recommendations will not lead to anywhere. The reason is that the main obstacle has not been eliminated," he added.

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