

31 DEC 2001

Mahathir-Discipline

MALAYSIANS MUST BE DISCIPLINED, SAYS DR MAHATHIR

PORT DICKSON, Dec 31 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today Malaysians must be disciplined and prepared to oppose anyone who threatens the country's peace and independence.

"We are confident that if anyone attacks the nation, the people and the military forces of Malaysia will be prepared to fight even if they have to sacrifice themselves for the country," the prime minister said at a passing-out parade for army recruits at the Army Basic Training Centre (Pusasda) here.

A total of 1,957 recruits had successfully completed their six-month training which started on June 25.

Present were Defence Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak, Negeri Sembilan Menteri Besar Tan Sri Mohamed Isa Abdul Samad, Deputy Defence Minister Datuk Shafie Apdal, Defence Forces Chief Tan Sri Mohamed Zahidi Zainuddin and senior military officers.

Dr Mahathir said the government was proud of the attitude of Malaysians who still displayed responsibility for the nation's defence by joining the armed forces voluntarily.

"We are grateful that the military in our country is still voluntary, not like in some countries which use force, that is, every citizen is trained as a military reserve for use in times of war," he said.

However, Malaysians must be prepared to be cooperative and united to face the new changes, namely the subjugation of weak countries not only through military means but also through other means including economic pressure.

"If we allow ourselves to be re-colonised, surely our independence will end and we will become slaves to others.

"No Malaysian wants to be a slave to others," he said.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysians should be thankful because although there were no laws forcing them to take up arms and defend the nation, many youths were prepared to do so to preserve the country's independence and freedom.

He also reminded the military personnel that they were professionals and that their duty was to defend the country according to the orders given by the elected government of the day.

"Although we may have a different stand or opinion, as professionals we cannot bring our thinking into our work. Our duty is to carry out all the orders given.

"I believe that we all understand the importance of being professional and having high discipline. We will not be able to defend our country if we don't have discipline because indisciplined bodies will not be able to successfully discharge their duties," he said.

The prime minister said the world today was faced with new problems like aeroplanes being used to crash into the World Trade Centre in New York on Sept 11.

"As a result of that, many people in the world are afraid, afraid of attacks that make no distinction between the military and civilians.

"As such, we must understand the new ways to counter attacks from terrorists," he said.

He said there was no place for those who fought for their rights by means of force and the people must learn how to defend the country from terrorists who attacked without using military means.

Later, at a news conference, Dr Mahathir said the government was taking

steps to provide more housing units to the military as well as perks to attract the people to join the armed forces.

"We are sad that there are military personnel living in squatter areas and we don't want that to happen," he said.

-- BERNAMA

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