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Mahathir-Deepavali

VALUE PEACE, CHERISH RACIAL TOLERANCE, SAYS DR MAHATHIR

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 13 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has urged Malaysians to sustain efforts to consolidate the prevailing racial tolerance and help the nation preserve the prosperity it has been blessed with.

The Prime Minister said it was the stability and harmony arising from the spirit of co-existence of all its citizens that steered Malaysia into being the most developed of developing countries.

"Without these values we may not be able to advance and prosper at a level we are enjoying now," Dr Mahathir said in a message to mark Deepavali which all Malaysian Hindus will celebrate tomorrow.

Despite Malaysia being an Islamic state and Muslims forming the majority of its people, the rights of other communities to profess in other faiths and practise own cultures are preserved and enshrined in the Constitution, he said.

Even the smallest Malaysian community would enjoy its political, social and economic rights and freedom, among other things, he said.

Dr Mahathir said perpetuating the Malaysian tradition of hosting open house during festivities would be one way towards strengthening understanding and tolerance among multi-racial Malaysians.

Unlike some other countries which disintegrated because of communal clashes and sectarian violence, Malaysia on the other hand saw foreign immigrants risking death just to enter it for a better life, he said.

While it was normal for developed countries to pose such attraction for foreign immigrants, Malaysia was an exception, he said.

The fact that two million foreign nationals had entered Malaysia either through the proper way or illegally spoke of the opportunities that a peaceful and progressive Malaysia offered them, he said.

Dr Mahathir hoped reasonable and rational Malaysians would cherish this reality of Malaysia's well-being and appreciate the good fortune of not having to immigrate to other countries to survive.

"Malaysia is our country and we have to make sure it enjoys everlasting peace and continues to progress," Dr Mahathir said.

He was convinced that through mutual respect Malaysians would not feel threatened in upholding their rights to practise their respective religion or culture.

Dr Mahathir however reminded Malaysians to be wary of attempts, of late, by extremist groups out to spark off disharmony and disrupt the prevailing peace.

The prime minister warned such elements that "the government will not compromise with any radical group pursuing narrow ideological cause in utter disregard for the rights of the other communities and followers of other religions."

-- BERNAMA

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