

01/01/2002

PM: Value our achievements (HL)

KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. - Malaysia's stability and development cannot be taken for granted, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said in his New Year message.

"We cannot assume that what we have will continue forever without any effort.

"Malaysia's success 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 available, and the limited sources of wealth that we have inherited.

"Malaysians of all races and religions should not only be proud of the situation the country is in but should also value it," he said.

Referring to the Sept 11 attacks on the United States and the subsequent events in Afghanistan, he said one good thing that arose from these events was that Malaysia was now regarded by many as an Islamic country that held on to the true moderate teachings of Islam.

"The image of Islam has been restored a little by the stability, democracy, and harmonious ties among the various races professing different religions as well as the visible progress of Malaysia," Dr Mahathir said.

The Prime Minister said Malaysia had proven that an Islamic country could be governed well, be developed and was stable even though it practised democracy.

"Here, rule of law or administration without considering rank or creed is practised.

"Even though the majority of the population are Muslims and they can seize power for themselves and refuse to recognise the rights of others, this has yet to happen," he said.

Dr Mahathir said this was proof that there could be an Islamic country where the rights of non-Muslims were protected and people of different religions could live in harmony.

Dr Mahathir said to continue the development and endurance of the country in information technology and the knowledge age, efforts were made to enhance the acquisition of knowledge by all Malaysians.

"We are very frustrated that efforts to balance the level of knowledge acquired by the various races have not been as successful as envisaged under the New Economic Policy."

Dr Mahathir said initially the response from Bumiputeras, especially Malays, to acquire knowledge and skills was very good.

Unfortunately, he said, when the assistance to Bumiputeras was increased there were quarters who instigated them and discouraged them from pursuing a university education.

"These instigators put more importance on their brand of politics. It seems knowledge not related to religion was not enough to equip them for the hereafter.

"(They say) education which is not related to religion is secular and not demanded by Islam.

"The reason for this instigation is that Muslims can be controlled by them.

"They fear that if Muslims are clever and can think, they will question the leadership of their group and reject them," Dr Mahathir said.

One of the hadith of Prophet Muhammad was to acquire knowledge.

Dr Mahathir said the reason there were fewer Muslim males in universities than Muslim females was not because they were less smarter but because they did not give emphasis to studies and were told from young they were only required to study religion.

"But their religious studies do not follow the true teachings of Islam.

"Their studies have more to do with the physical form of Islam rather than the content and towards hating other Muslims whom they accuse of being unIslamic or lesser Muslims," he said.

He added that, in short, all the good teachings of Islam were set aside.

Dr Mahathir said despite all the policies, plans, financial allocation, funds and special agencies to help Bumiputeras and Malays succeed, what had been achieved was far short of what had been planned.

Dr Mahathir said the entire world was racing towards progress and those who lose will not only be left behind but will also be humiliated and oppressed.

He said the civilisation of the 21st century of the third millennium was still primitive, and likened it to that of the stone age.

"In this age, the measure of truth is the ability to kill the most people.

"Whoever can kill the most number in the shortest time is truthful. And their truthfulness will be praised by the media and non-governmental organisations controlled by them.

"To preserve the country's status as a free and independent nation, the people must understand their weaknesses and abilities and the challenges that will come in the modern world.

"Let us ponder on our good fortune and ensure we do not become victims of the primitive civilisation of the 21st century."

Dr Mahathir said while being happy with the achievements of the year, the people were also saddened by the recent demise of the 11th Yang di-Pertuan Agong Almarhum Sultan Salahuddin Abdul Aziz Shah and all Malaysians felt the loss of someone who always had their well-being and that of the economy at heart.

He said the Government and the people congratulated the 12th Yang di-Pertuan Agong Tuanku Syed Sirajuddin Syed Jamalullail on his installation and that of the Deputy Yang di-Pertuan Agong Sultan Tuanku Mizan Zainal Abidin.

(END)