

31/08/2002

PM calls for small sacrifice (HL)

Hayati Hayatudin

KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad reminded Malaysians that they will not continue to enjoy peace and harmony if small issues are exaggerated and government policies intentionally misinterpreted.

He also warned them that if everything was politicised for small gains, it would ruin peace and devastate the economy and the remedy might not be found again.

In his National Day message which was aired over radio and television tonight, Dr Mahathir also reminded Malaysians to be aware of the threat of a new form of colonisation.

To retain peace and harmony, the Prime Minister said, Malaysians should offer a small sacrifice in order to sustain the existing racial harmony.

Such a little contribution would not result in the races losing their identities.

"We will remain Chinese, Tamil, Malay, Kadazan, Iban and others. But we'll also become more Malaysian, making us different from the communities in our countries of origin," he said.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysians should not politicise every government policy and effort by turning it into racial issues as its objectives were for the betterment of the people.

The Government, he said, had never victimised or oppressed any race as each and every one of them had been given due attention.

"Malaysians should look at the Government's track record since independence in 1957.

"The country is now recognised as a successful developing country despite the fact that we had to cater to the needs of different religions, cultures and languages," he said.

Referring specifically to the issue of using English to teach Mathematics and Science in schools, Dr Mahathir said the Government had no intention of sidelining any language of the races.

The Government had abolished English schools as it believed that national schools would replace them for all races.

However, the objective was not achieved as much modern knowledge could best be acquired in English.

Dr Mahathir also expressed concern over racial segregation in schools and universities.

He said deliberate segregation in schools, universities and private higher learning institutions resulted in students isolating themselves and not being exposed to the customs and tradition, taboos and cultures of the other races.

The decision to use English when teaching Mathematics and Science, he said, was questioned as some quarters claimed that it would sideline the Malay, Chinese and Tamil languages.

Dr Mahathir explained that the proposal was merely to enable Malaysians to acquire knowledge in Science and Mathematics and equip the various races to face the increasingly challenging world.

"When Malaysians succeed, Malaysia succeeds, too. We will benefit from a country which progresses and develops vibrantly.

"This is the Government's only intention and nothing else. There is no intention to sideline the national, Malay, Chinese or Tamil languages," Dr Mahathir said.

Dr Mahathir said in celebrating the 45th National Day, Malaysians should reflect on how lucky they were.

"Our success did not fall into our lap, but is the fruit of hard work and efforts of our forefathers and the country's leadership."

Malaysians, he added, have enjoyed being free from colonialism and have lived in peace and harmony.

"The Government has administered and developed the country well and has solved its own problems, and the world acknowledges our efforts.

"On this National Day, take the time to ask ourselves - do we value, cherish and love our country's independence and are we willing to sacrifice for our nation?"

Dr Mahathir said that National Day was actually for Malaysians to appreciate the fact that they are fortunate to be free and independent and capable of ruling and developing their own country.

"It's true that we're not safe just because we have achieved independence. The danger of colonisation still threatens us.

"If we're not careful, if we fail to appreciate our independence, if we allow ourselves to be instigated to topple our Government, then we may find ourselves recolonised. "The price of freedom is eternal vigilance," he said.