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Mahathir-Message

RENEW RESOLVE TO UPHOLD MALAYSIA'S FREEDOM, MALAYSIANS TOLD

KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 30 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today called on Malaysians to renew their resolve to uphold the nation's freedom, to forge ahead and to contribute in ensuring its peace, prosperity and resilience, in celebrating the 45th National Day tomorrow.

He said that National Day celebrated every year was actually for Malaysians to remind themselves and appreciate the fact that they were 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 colonization still threatens us. If we're not careful, if we fail to appreciate our independence, if we were to allow ourselves to be instigated that we are prepared to topple our government, then we shouldn't regret if we were recolonized.

"The price of freedom is eternal vigilance," Dr Mahathir said in his National Day message aired over radio and television.

Dr Mahathir said that many countries had achieved independence like Malaysia but were no longer free because the running of such countries and their policies were determined by foreign powers and their rulers were mere puppets.

The prime minister said that the significance of independence was being less understood by many people in the country as they were born after independence and never experienced being colonized and their dignity undermined.

He said that Malaysians should be proud of the nation's independence, not out of arrogance, but to ensure their security and well-being.

"We strive for independence because we know better the problems faced by the country and we are more sensitive and more responsible in resolving our problems. Outsiders are not likely to understand the complex problems faced by our multiracial country," he said.

Dr Mahathir said that Malaysians had proven their capability to rule and develop, maintain peace and security and overcome challenges faced by the country on its own without outside assistance.

To preserve the nation's security and prosperity, he said, the people of various races and religions in the country should be prepared to make a little personal sacrifice to enhance racial harmony which was fundamental to the country's peace and security.

"We need to make just a little sacrifice. We're not likely to lose our racial identity. We'll remain Chinese, Indian, 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 that deliberate racial segregation like in schools, universities and private higher learning institutions resulted in students isolating themselves and not exposed to the customs and tradition, taboo and culture of the other races.

He said that measures to promote togetherness among primary school students by locating national, Chinese and Tamil schools within a campus had been objected to by extremist groups while the proposal to use English for the mastery of science and mathematics had been condemned on the grounds that its implementation would undermine the importance of the mother tongue of the Malays, Chinese and Indians.

Stressing that the intention of the government was only to equip the

people of the various races in the country in the fields of science and mathematics to enable them to compete with others in the world, he said that the issue should not be politicised for purposes of narrow racial agenda.

"If we were to play up minor issues, if we were to wrongly interpret the government's policies and actions deliberately, if we were to politicise everything for small gains, then we cannot hope to continue to enjoy the peace and prosperity we have up to now," he said.

Recalling the country's experience in facing the 1997-1998 economic crisis and its success in overcoming it, Dr Mahathir said that after four years, the country's economy had been restored and performing better than the countries which had accepted the formula and loans of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), by implementing its own formula.

He said that due to this success, Malaysia continue to be free to speak out, adopt its own stand, remain non-aligned, and capable of resisting external attacks.

"Ours is true independence unlike others where the country's policies are determined by outsiders," he said.

Saying that such experience had prompted the country to be very cautious in terms of globalization promoted by foreign powers, the prime minister said that Malaysia was not totally against globalization but there should be conditions in foreign participation and they should not have a free rein in the country.

He said that if the participation of foreign power in the country's economic activities was not curtailed, they would be in control of the economy and would invite interference in the determination of the country's leadership and all domestic and foreign policies.

"Then, we'll no longer be free. Then, we would have been colonized," he said.

Dr Mahathir said that he was not instilling fear in the people into giving their support to the government but it was a reality because the big powers still have intention to dominate countries that were weak, countries where the people were different ethnically from them, and countries rich in natural resources that could be exploited by them.

The prime minister said that Malaysians were fortunate because policies and measures towards greater success had been laid.

He said that due to efforts and cooperation between the people and the government, towns had developed rapidly, with modern facilities while in the rural areas, much progress had also been achieved.

Calling on the people to come out and celebrate the anniversary of the country's independence and to pray for the safety and success of all Malaysians, he said that the country's independence must be cherished, appreciated and preserved.

"Let's not create problems and issues that could destroy what we have built. Let's not jeopardise our future and that of the future generation with obsession and fanaticism over matters which are actually insignificant compared with what we have already achieved, what we have enjoyed in our beloved country," he said.

-- BERNAMA

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