

Don't take peace for granted, urges sultan

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ALOR STAR: The people cannot take the peace in the country for granted, the Sultan of Kedah said yesterday.

Sultan Abdul Halim Mu'adzam Shah said the people could not ignore various threats which might affect the country although there was peace now.

He said the sovereignty issue over Pulau Batu Puteh should be taken as a lesson not to take regional security issues lightly.

He also said the people had to be wary of extremists who use religion, ideology and racial issues to create division and chaos in the community.

"All the comfort and peace we are enjoying today can disappear in the blink of an eye if we do not nurture them carefully," the sultan said at the investiture ceremony at Istana Anak Bukit in conjunction with his 75th birthday celebrations.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad was among 100 people who were bestowed titles by Sultan Abdul Halim yesterday.

He received the Darjah Kerabat which is Kedah's highest royal award.

The sultan said the country would be easily colonised if the people were not united.

On the teaching of Science and Mathematics in English, the sultan hoped all those involved would pay serious attention to make the programme a success.

He said it was now time to give due focus to pre-school education so that children aged five and six, especially those in the rural areas, would get proper and quality pre-school education.

The sultan advised parents to play a bigger role in educating their children in moral and religious aspects.

"Parents must not leave this responsibility to educators and leaders. Don't blame others if something happens to our children or don't curse darkness but light the candle," he added.

He urged political leaders to lead the people towards unity.

He said the state and country would lose an accomplished statesman when Dr Mahathir left the Government at the end of the year.

Mentri Besar Datuk Seri Syed Razak Syed Zain, who was bestowed the Dato Seri Setia Di Raja title, said the state's economy was expected to grow by at least 6.5% this year compared with the projected 4% to 5% last year.

He also said the current progress status of projects which were catalysts to drive the state to achieve developed status by 2010 was about 30%.

The projects included the Yan power station, Baris Dam in Sik, new hospitals in Sungai Petani and Alor Star, Kota Putra town project in Durian Burung and the Kota Perdana town project in Bukit Kayu Hitam.

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