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Diversity is strength, King tells Malaysians

All reports on "Dewan Rakyat" by Koh Lay Chin; June Ramli
MALAYSIANS should see their diversity as a strength and always remember the sensitivity of the various races in their actions, Yang di-Pertuan Agong Tuanku Syed Sirajuddin said yesterday.

He said they should uphold multi-racial unity and mutual respect at all times.

The King said the people should also shoulder the responsibility of maintaining racial harmony along with the Government.

Racial harmony was the root of peace and prosperity in Malaysia, he said, adding that Malaysians had to pay special attention to the needs of all races.

"Diversity must be seen as a strength as it allows us to see problems and issues from all perspectives," he said when opening the first session of the 11th Parliament.

The King said the Government would continue efforts to maintain racial unity through various programmes, such as the Vision School project, the National Service and open houses.

National Service, he said, would be enhanced and made more efficient by the Government.

"As National Service has been implemented for the first time to increase patriotism, national integration and racial harmony, I hope that all levels of society will give it their full support."

The King also spoke of his concern over corruption, with some betraying the trust placed in them by the people.

"This problem has to be addressed immediately and I am proud the Government does not discriminate in its efforts to eradicate corruption."

He also spoke on the Islam Hadhari concept and how it emphasised development as well as improvement in Islamic education and the implementation of Syariah.

"Islam is a religion that loves peace and Malaysia has proven that Muslims and non-Muslims can live together in harmony.

"However, narrow interpretation, extreme practices and negative actions are the main causes behind the Muslim community's weakness and why it is left out of development," he said.

Also affecting Malaysians were the increase in social ills and immorality resulting in crimes like child rape, incest and drug abuse.

The Government, communities and parents, religious teachers, ulama and Islamic experts should take responsibility in addressing this problem.

"The approach of punishing, blaming others and having general lectures should be changed. Ulama and preachers should go to the ground and approach those afflicted with social diseases and give them guidance and advice."

The King was worried about recent developments in and outside the country, such as increasing international trade competition, the slow recovery of the global economy and terrorist activities worldwide.

He was glad that the Government had taken measures to improve the efficiency and ability of the country to meet such challenges, adding that Malaysians should brave such problems together.

"World history is filled with examples of empires and civilisations that were destroyed or had disappeared from the face of the earth because their citizens did not work together," he said.

He also paid tribute to former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad

for his 22 years of sacrifices.

The King also congratulated Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi on his appointment as Prime Minister.

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