

13/06/2003

`Safeguard nation against foreign intervention'

Firdaus Abdullah

PUTRAJAYA, Thurs. - Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today appealed to Malaysians, especially the younger generation of Malays, to protect the nation at all costs and resist any attempt by outsiders to take over the country.

Urging everyone to take a leaf from the country's history, particularly the struggle for independence, the Prime Minister said it would be easy to surrender the country in exchange for political protection, but by doing so, the nation would be re-colonised.

Dr Mahathir said this at the launch of a book on Umno's founding father Dato' Onn Ja'afar at the Putrajaya Marriott Hotel here.

Alluding to the pre-independence period when Malay States gladly handed over the administration of their territories to the British in return for protection, the Umno president said:

"We were relieved at that time that they took over the running of this country.

"I was complaining then ... what is more easier than to accept political protection and do nothing and leave the administration of the country to the British? We gladly surrendered our independence.

"I hope that with this book, the people, the Malays in the future will realise that you must not surrender anything to anybody. This is your only country and if you surrender, then of course you'll have no country of your own."

Citing an old Malay story, Dr Mahathir said colonialists would have no qualms accepting from the Malays even a piece of land the size of a cow's hide.

But the hide would later be cut into strings which would eventually cover a much larger area than what had been originally given to them.

"This is a lesson from history, never give anything away, not even the hide of the cow. It may be small but one could make it bigger."

The moral of the story, said the Prime Minister, was that when one gave up something, one might end up giving more.

Dr Mahathir also advised Malaysians, especially writers, to record important happenings in the country for the benefit of future generations.

If historic occasions were not recorded immediately, he said there was a possibility that facts might be lost or become distorted.

"What is happening now is actually historic, so there must be a good record of things happening as these are lessons for future generations to learn from.

"Preserving history will prevent them from repeating our mistakes while emulating measures that have proven beneficial for us," Dr Mahathir said.

Touching on the book, Dr Mahathir said Dato' Onn was the saviour of Malays at a crucial time in the evolution of the country.

He said the great leader's spirit of service above self and determination to protect the country's sovereignty should be emulated by all.

"Dato' Onn was a great man, he was the first Malay to lead a nation-wide protest against the British."

Dr Mahathir said Dato Onn, however, left Umno and formed the first splinter group after his proposal that the party be opened to all Malaysians was not well received.

"Dato Onn was too fast for his time, but his goal was eventually

realised when Umno, MCA and MIC were united by Tengku Abdul Rahman under the Alliance banner which went on to obtain independence from the British," he said.

Present at today's function were members from three generations of the Onn family, including Youth and Sports Minister Datuk Hishammuddin Tun Hussien, who is Dato' Onn's grandson. Also present were Datuk Seri Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and Datuk Seri Endon Mahmood.

The book is written by Datuk Mohamed Abid, one of Dato Onn's many grandchildren.