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# PM: Let's give meaning to the cry of Merdeka

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**KUALA LUMPUR:** Shouts of "Merdeka!" will continue to ring across the nation in the next 50 years if the legacy of the nation's founding fathers is taken to heart, the prime minister said.

Merdeka, Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said, was the result of a sacred struggle to defend one's rightful heritage, a national treasure built upon the pillars of history.

"To take it for granted is rude and to dishonour its sanctity is a sin," he said at the national Merdeka celebration in Stadium Merdeka.

"But we must also remember that the shouts are not just noise, the shouts have a meaning. The meaning leads to a cause which leads to action which ultimately transforms into a formula for building a multi-racial country that is truly harmonious, peaceful, united, prosperous and respected," he said.

Abdullah said every Malaysian should be grateful for inheriting a nation that was free to pursue 50 years of achievement.

"We should be thankful for rescuing millions out of the valley of poverty.

"We should give thanks for the peace that we enjoy in plenty. Don't forget that the peace we enjoy is still a dream for many nations.

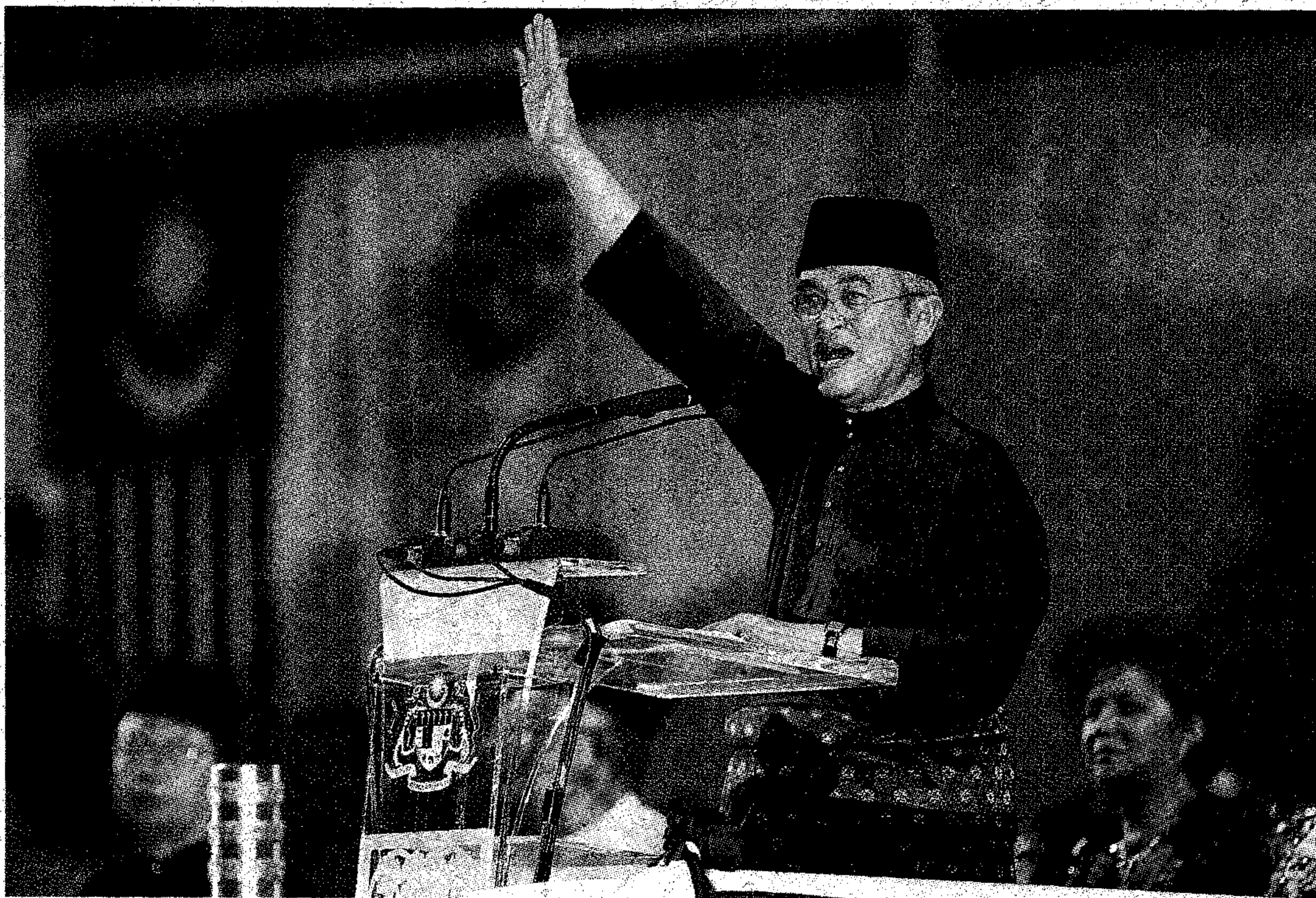
"We should be thankful that from a nation with many reasons to fight, from a nation facing internal and external threats, we succeeded in building a nation that is stable, prosperous and peaceful.

"I am thankful that Malaysia had a lineage of leaders with great vision, starting with Tunku Abdul Rahman, followed by Tun Abdul Razak, Tun Hussein Onn and then Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad."

Abdullah also thanked every community leader who fought hard against the mental shackles of colonialism.

"We must also not forget the contributions of our civil servants, our educators and teachers, our judiciary and legal institutions. Everyone played a part in building this nation."

Abdullah also thanked the media, armed forces, police force and especially the citizens for their contributions in nation-



Abdullah speaking with passion at the Merdeka celebration held at the newly renovated Merdeka Stadium last night.

building.

He said although independence had already been won, it was up to the present and next generations to continue the legacy of the past generations.

"To them, will we entrust the responsibility to continue the work of building our nation.

"God has poured his blessings on Malaysia, on this land; so the younger generation should take full advantage of that favour and bring about greater success to Malaysia, bringing it from glory to glory."

Abdullah also acknowledged that Malaysia would not be where it was today without the contributions of the different races.

"Malaysia was built on equity and co-operation, and it is also through these values that the nation will continue to prosper and become great," he said.

"We will never allow religious extremism to see the light of day. We will ensure that the rights and interests of every race in Malaysia are always protected and upheld without prejudice."

Abdullah assured that Malaysia

would continue as a united nation based on the Rukun Negara, "a nation that holds on to the concept of justice and equality, a nation that continues to fight poverty and aims to ensure prosperity for all".

"Only then can Malaysia continue on its course to become a modern and developed nation.

"One that is rich in knowledge, innovative and able to compete with the best in the world," he said.

Most importantly, Abdullah said, the independence of the nation had to be continually defend-

ed. "Fifty years have passed and now we are on the threshold of the first day of another 50 years of freedom.

"Let us all promise ourselves that we will never again allow our land and thinking to be colonised. Let us hold up high the torch of our independence as we step into the next phase of Malaysia's existence," said Abdullah, who then immediately led the crowd to shouts of Merdeka as a symbolic pledge towards Malaysia's future success.