

'Unity for nation's dignity'

PM: Govt will defend the rights of all citizens as a family

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PUTRAJAYA: Asserting that Malaysia belongs to all, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim has assured that his government will defend the rights of all citizens.

Anwar said the nation's strength was its unity, and any attempts to weaken it must be rejected.

"Don't take this lightly. Countries which were powerful and home to great civilisations were brought to shambles, not only because of poor governance and corruption. It is also because the flame of racism was ignited," he said in his National Day address yesterday.

Also present were his deputies, Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi, Datuk Seri Fadillah Yusof, Cabinet ministers and Chief Secretary to the Government Tan Sri Mohd Zuki Ali.

The Prime Minister said unique differences in ethnicity, religion and culture had shaped Malaysia into what it is today.

"Differences can either be turned into a strength or they can lead to the path of destruction. The latter is not the choice," he said.

"We can make the choice between creating unrest, doubting each other, and sowing political and racial hatred.

"Or we can choose to say that enough is enough; let us use this time to strategise and work towards upholding the country's dignity," he said.

Anwar said unity, which had been long practised by our forefathers, must remain the core spirit of the people today and in the future.

"We attained Independence with the Malays, Bumiputra, Chinese and Indians. Then, we formed Malaysia with our friends in Sabah and Sarawak.

"We became a family. Malaysia belongs to all of her people," he added.

The Prime Minister also paid tribute to the security forces, saying that it would have been a challenge to preserve peace and independence if not for them.

He mentioned the Lahad Datu incursions



Embracing diversity: Anwar waving the Jalur Gemilang as he stands with the crowd during the Majlis Amanat Perdana Hari Kebangsaan at Putrajaya International Convention Centre in Putrajaya. – AZHAR MAHFOF/The Star

in 2013, the Malaysia-Indonesia Confrontation and the communist insurgency as incidents that saw security forces defend the nation.

"We will overcome whatever challenges come our way. We will defend every inch of this beloved land," he said.

Touching on the meaning of Merdeka, or Independence, Anwar said while the country had been liberated from the clutches of colonialism, it was also important that the people's "spirit and mentality were liberated".

"Appreciating Merdeka meant that every Malaysian, right from the highest leadership to the people, must know that this country has been entrusted to them," he said.

He said a nation that is independent

means that all resources and strength are ploughed towards upholding the rights of the people and the dignity of the country.

"I am confident that if Malaysians have this spirit, this country will emerge great and strong," added Anwar.

Earlier, the packed hall of Putrajaya International Convention Centre saw civil servants, students, youths and representatives of non-governmental organisations firing up the Merdeka spirit by singing patriotic songs.