

Put competence first, Guan Eng tells Malaysians
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By Yow Hong Chieh

KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 30 — Malaysians must put character and competence above race before the country can overcome its shortcomings and thrive amid greater competition worldwide, Lim Guan Eng said.

The DAP secretary-general said that while the nation has made much economic progress since independence, the time has come for Malaysians to abandon failed policies in favour of new ones to build better prospects and prepare the next generation for the challenges of globalisation.

“We must impress on our young that there is no substitute for competence. Neither is there any alternative to innovation and creativity as the roadmap towards high-income status. But first we must be comfortable as Malaysians,” Lim (picture) said in his National Day message today.

“There must be a sense of Malaysian identity that what we are is more important than who we are; that the content of our character is more important than the colour of our skin and that how we connect with other Malaysians is more important than our past ancestry.”

Malaysians need to know how to hold on to important ethnic identities while still identifying strongly with a national identity that binds the country together, the same unique challenge faced by our “founding fathers” decades ago, he said.

He lamented that the power and freedom to be “masters of our own destiny” granted by independence have been abused to instil fear among Malaysians that their racial identity and rights will be taken away if a national identity based on freedom, justice and equality were to take root.

“The constant identification and emphasis on ‘bogeymen’, be it certain opposition political parties, communists or Christians, is a clear demonstration that the goal of 1 Malaysia still eludes us.

“In fact, to many 1 Malaysia sounds too much like an empty slogan devoid of substance,” he said, adding that the “politics of fear” appears to have become more commonplace after the 2008 general election which saw the opposition sweep five states.

Lim hoped Malaysians would once again find the moral courage and strength of character to decide what it is to be truly Malaysian despite the race-first views promoted by groups like Perkasa and “irresponsible” newspapers like Utusan Malaysia.

But Malaysians must first have an environment where basic freedoms are respected and protected to do this, he pointed out, saying that the July 9 Bersih rally was an example of how a push to protect our freedoms had resulted in a spontaneous coming together of Malaysians from all races.

“Here, the assertion of a basic right — the freedom to assemble — which was promised by Tunku Abdul Rahman during his Merdeka remarks on August 31, 1957, was asserted together with a strong showing of solidarity among Malaysians. This is the kind of Malaysian

identity which needs to be inculcated in us, especially among the younger generation.

"We must be Malaysian first always and Malays, Chinese, Indian, Kadazan, Iban second. Selamat Hari Merdeka to all Malaysians and to all Malaysians seeking our Malaysianness within," Lim said.

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