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(PRIME MINISTER)

EVENT: NATIONAL DAY MESSAGE

VENUE: RADIO AND TELEVISION MALAYSIA

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TIME:

We thank Almighty Allah for His blessings for today we are able to once again celebrate our national day -- our day of independence.

2. It has been 35 years since we gained independence and Malaysians have every reason to feel proud, happy and grateful. We are grateful because Malaysia currently is one of the few countries in the world which continues to be prosperous, stable, peaceful and harmonious. We should be proud because Malaysia's multiracial population have been able to live harmoniously, united and with mutual respect and understanding. We have been very fortunate because we do not encounter any racial or religious conflicts as in the case of some countries which have resulted in the loss of lives and destruction of property. We also do not face starvation, oppression or war.

3. The calm situation has enabled us to perform our daily tasks peacefully. Malaysians can carry out their religious practices without hindrance.

4. In addition to this political stability, the Malaysian economy is strong and growing rapidly. Malaysia's orderly management of the economy has resulted in a high growth rate. This rate is expected to be sustained at a high level. This encouraging economic growth has enabled Malaysians to continue to enjoy a high standard of living. The Government's revenue is adequate for the growing needs of industrial and infrastructural development.

5. Malaysia also has a very low unemployment rate. We have succeeded in stabilising the prices of goods. Apart from this, we also have managed to reduce poverty. While in the past, the people, especially those in the rural areas, had no access to basic amenities like clinics, schools, roads, water and electricity, now they have been provided with such facilities.

6. We can be proud also that we have a high standard of education and an efficient administration. Today all Malaysian children have access to the highest level of education, right up to the post-graduate level. Today many university students come from the rural areas. Our administrative machinery is comparable to that of other developed countries. We have been successful in developing the country rapidly because we have a Government which is sensitive to the needs of the people.

7. These are indeed Malaysia's achievements and advantage.

When we achieved independence 35 years ago, many people predicted that this country will collapse because it is multi-racial, multicultural and multireligious. But now Malaysia has proven to the world that its multiracial nature did not prevent it from achieving progress and success. In fact if its people are hardworking, disciplined and show respect for one another, a multiracial nation can be successful and achieve excellence.

8. Although we have been successful in our development these past 35 years, we must always be wary and continue to strive hard. The Government has outlined a vision of a developed nation towards which we should strive. Therefore, this year's theme "Vision - The Basis of Progress" is most appropriate and consistent with the objective we have set for the year 2020.

9. As an independent nation we have to guard the nation's dignity and sovereignty. A poor nation will not only be a burden to its people but will not gain the respect of others. A poor nation will not be able to act freely because it is too dependent on the help and goodwill of others. If we do not attempt to forge ahead from now we will remain a poor nation. If this happens, then the tragic situation experienced by a number of countries, will befall us. If this happens then our independence, of which we are so proud, will no longer be meaningful. What is the meaning of independence if, because we are weak and poor, we are unable to defend the truth? Of what use is an independent nation, if its people live in misery and is perpetually dependent on the charity of others? To protect our dignity and sovereignty as a truly independent country, we must turn Malaysia into a developed nation, comparable to other developed countries.

10. The path towards 2020 is certainly not easy and will be full of challenges. Each step that we take will be met with all kinds of obstacles.

11. Nevertheless, we must have faith in our ability to achieve the objectives of Vision 2020. With independence we have succeeded in overcoming many barriers and managed to equip ourselves with knowledge and skill we never had before. By increasing our effort and determination, God-willing, our vision will become a reality.

12. To become a developed nation, one must ensure political stability, unity and sustainable economic growth. We must continue to cooperate and be united. We must also be wary of others who are out to disrupt the unity among the races. If we do not unite, then our objective of becoming a developed nation will not be realised. I am confident that Malaysians who love peace and stability will do everything possible to avoid disrupting this harmony.

13. The national day celebration means a lot to us. It gives us the opportunity to reflect on the history of our struggle for independence from the colonialists, in addition to enabling us to evaluate our achievements for the 35 years of self rule. By reflecting and understanding the history of our people's struggle, Malaysians, especially those born after independence, will be able to appreciate better the true meaning of independence. It will also enlighten us to

the importance of a life free from colonialism. We must always remember that colonialism can appear in other forms.

14. As with our past leaders who, in their struggle for independence, had had their own vision to liberate Malaysia from colonialism so now we have formulated a vision that will take our nation to a higher level of development.

15. God-willing, with the mobilisation of efforts by Malaysians at all levels, our objective of becoming a developed nation will be realised.