

Dr M: Support BN

EST 26 JUL 1986

KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. — Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has called on the people to stand firm in supporting the Barisan Nasional for stability and a better future for everyone.

In an open letter to the rakyat contained in the Barisan Nasional manifesto, the Prime Minister said the coalition had a sound track record.

He said the country had been enjoying peace and stability and was the envy of many.

"Let us gather our strengths in this hour of trial. Let us not experiment with untested ideas. Let us unite for a better future," he added.

He said even when the Barisan Nasional was faced with prob-

lems, however threatening, it did not resort to extremism.

"It decides by consultation. It abhors emotions. It draws up plans that bring concrete benefits and implements them. It believes in results, not rhetoric.

"It listens to the people. It balances the demands of the different races, the regions and States, the rich and the poor, the urban and the rural."

Dr Mahathir said the coalition's basic philosophies were sound.

If it had not achieved complete success, it was because, like all nations and all Governments, it could not foresee all eventualities, did not have unlimited resources and had not perfected its implementation techniques, he said.

He told the people that the Barisan Nasional Government would

take corrective measures whenever they were needed as it was a responsive Government.

On the arguments by the opposition that the Government should be deprived of a two-thirds majority in Parliament, Dr Mahathir said multi-racial Malaysia needed a strong Government to move ahead to guarantee stability.

He asked the opposition whether it would want a weak Government if it was ruling.

"A weak Government will only be playing the politics of survival. It will constantly need to play to the gallery rather than what needs to be done. A weak Government will not bring us out of the present recession.

"We have seen this happening in many countries. As politicians try to outmanoeuvre each other, the

for a better future

country suffers. Our children deserve a better future."

The Barisan Nasional Government had been very liberal and the opposition had taken full advantage of this, he said.

"Yet they say we are oppressive. If today we hear numerous baseless accusations against the Government and its leaders, it is because we are not oppressive.

"There are now freer reports and comments in our newspapers and magazines, more than at any time in the history of Malaysia.

"Often the accusations are without foundation and only seek to sow confusion and doubt. This is the price of democracy. The Government's only weapon is truth and positive action."

Dr Mahathir said he realised that the country was now going

through a difficult period as a result of the economic slowdown.

Although Malaysia was not as badly off as other countries, the slowdown had worried Malaysians used to high economic growth, he said.

It was easy to blame the Government and use it as a scapegoat, he added.

Dr Mahathir said it must be realised that the fall in commodity prices was not the Government's doing.

New technology, substitute materials, new producers, slack demand and market manipulations by rich countries have depressed the prices of commodities.

Money was not so easy to make now and so houses, cars and goods were not so easily saleable, he said. Government revenues too

have shrunk.

The Prime Minister said the only way for the country to tide over the slowdown was to face it calmly, to plan its moves carefully and to utilise its intrinsic strengths.

"If we give in to emotions, if we choose the easy way out and wildly accuse each other, we will only compound the damage."

He asked the people why so many took risks to smuggle themselves into the country if Malaysia was so bad.

He said it was when the going got tough that the country needed a steady, experienced and firm hand to deal with the problems it faced.

"We need a strong Government. Already, the corrective measures

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are showing results."

The nation's external borrowings had been reduced from \$4.6 billion in 1982 to \$0.8 billion last year while Government expenditure had been reduced from \$27,110 million in 1982 to \$24,859 million last year, he said.

In addition, imports had been reduced so much that the balance of payments had been increasingly favourable despite sluggish exports, he added.

There were better growth incentives, reserves remained high, jobs were being created and the civil service performance had improved, he said.

Dr Mahathir said the Government would continue to be guided by the principles of the clean, efficient and trustworthy concept and would continue with its efforts to create a modern, disciplined and moral society.

He said no one could deny that the country was today cleaner and healthier than before.

Health, medical and educational services had improved, the prices of essentials had been reduced, cheaper houses had been built, rural de-