

PM spells out New Year resolutions

For peace and harmony

NST - 1 JAN 1988

KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. — The Prime Minister today underscored the need for peace and harmony and spelt out a formula to achieve this.

In his New Year message to the nation, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the formula involved not playing up trivial matters and fanning the flames, and at the same time resolving the bigger problems through closed-door discussions.

"If we want 1988 to be a better and happier year, we must at the very least ensure that we do not do anything that will eventually be to our loss.

"Towards this aim, we should make New Year resolutions not to deliberately hurt the feelings of the communities in our country.

"Small matters should not be played up. Matters that are regarded as large should be solved through closed-door discussions. The mass media is not the place for us to put forth points on how to solve problems."

Reducing unemployment

Dr Mahathir reminded Malaysians not to denigrate the image of their own country among foreigners. Students who are overseas, whether Muslim or not, should not disparage the name of the country.

"They should remember that their actions will reduce foreign investments in their own country. Employment opportunities will be lessened and they, too, will become victims."

On the Government's part, Dr Mahathir said it would continue to keep a check on its expenditure in 1988 to ensure that wastage will not occur and thus step up economic development.

This, he said, was one of the Government's resolutions for the new year. The others are:

- To continue to do its best to reduce unemployment; and,
- To be firmer in ensuring that peace is maintained in the country.

The Prime Minister began his message by reviewing the

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major domestic events during the year which had affected the people — the economic slowdown, the stock market crash and the rising tension in the country that eventually resulted in the cancellation of all public gatherings.

Outside the country, the image of Malaysia had been smeared by foreign newspapers as well as certain groups and individuals.

Dr Mahathir said: "1987 was thus a challenging year. However, the country's economy could not be revived quickly despite its potential because of the irresponsible attitude and greedy characteristics of certain groups in our society.

"For those already working, productivity should be given priority. Among the developing countries of South-East Asia, Malaysia has the lowest productivity.

"The unemployed should make resolutions to be prepared to work and not be so choosy. There are indeed still many job opportunities in the country.

"We depend for our livelihood on revenue from our production. In this modern age, competition cannot be avoided. If our goods are expensive and of low quality, we will not succeed in selling them.

"Our industries will then decline and not only will it not be possible for wages to be raised, but we may become jobless when our factories and estates cannot make profits."

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Managers must increase their efficiency

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"Again, investors will not invest and job opportunities for the unemployed will not be created if investors know that the productivity of our workers is low."

Dr Mahathir also reminded managers to increase their efficiency. If they were not efficient in handling money, equipment and manpower in their businesses, no amount of aid would result in higher productivity.

"Excessive speculation needs to be reduced, if not stopped. We have found that financial problems faced by many of our traders were because they were too speculative, particularly in the stock market. When the share prices dropped, they had big problems.

"The stock market was meant to be a place to collect capital from the public to start or expand businesses.

"Fluctuations in share prices ought to be linked to the performance of companies and their assets.

"The driving up and pushing down of share prices without taking into account the performance of companies will sooner or later bring disaster."

It would therefore be good if speculators reduced their activities, and instead resolved to use their energy, time and thoughts for managing proper businesses, Dr Mahathir said.

"In the new year, we hope that most of our problems will be overcome. While we depend on God, we should not forget that this dependency does not mean that we should wash our hands of our responsibilities. We must all work in the interest of our beloved country."