

DR M: DON'T BLOW UP SMALL ISSUES

'Be sensitive'

By KHALID JAAFAR

PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad last night urged Malaysians to stop taking action which in the past caused the nation to suffer.

In his New Year message over Radio and Television Malaysia (RTM) he called on Malaysians to stop touching on the sensitivities of various races in the country.

"Small matters should not be blown out of proportion. Issues considered serious should be resolved in closed door negotiations. The mass media is not the forum for settling problems," he added.

He also urged Malaysians to stop tarnishing the country's image overseas. Students overseas, Muslims or non Muslims, should not tell lies and smear the country.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said students are the ones going to suffer for their own actions. Their activities will deter foreign investors from coming to Malaysia, hence there will be less employment opportunities.

He urged the unemployed to be pre-

pared to work and not to be choosy about jobs.

"In reality there are still job opportunities in the country. Otherwise why do foreigners take the trouble to come to Malaysia and our seas intruded into by foreign fishermen?" he asked.

The workers should strive for increased productivity because investors will not come to a country with unproductive workers. He noted that the productivity of Malaysian workers is among the lowest in the developing South-East Asian countries.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said that the livelihood of Malaysians depends on the products the country produced which face competition in the world market.

Malaysia will not be able to sell its goods if their quality is low and are highly priced. As a result, industry will decline and workers unable to enjoy pay increases or even face unemployment when factories or estates do not make profits, he said.

Urging workers to increase their productivity, the Prime Minister stressed that wage levels must be commensurate with productivity.

The wage level is not determined by workers' demands or threats but by the ability of the employer to pay, which in turn depends on the sale, productivity and quality of output.

Low wages will not result in higher productivity if the quality of products is low. Similarly, high wages will not result in low productivity if output increases are commensurate with upward movement of wages, he added.

He called on Malaysian managers to buck up as there are signs that management performance in Malaysia is low.

Any kind of assistance would be useless if money, manpower and equipment and the businesses are poorly managed, the Prime Minister said.

He urged the business community to reduce excessive speculative activities,

especially in the stock market, as they are the cause of many woes faced by the community.

Those fond of speculating should instead utilise their time, energy and mind to manage their real business, he added.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir reiterated that the stock market is an institution to mobilise funds from the public to finance new ventures and business expansion.

Fluctuation in share prices has no relation to the performance of a particular company. Attempts to push prices up and depress them will eventually result in disaster.

As for the Government, he said its resolution for 1988 is to continue to keep a tight rein on expenditure, to curb wastage and to enable the economy to grow at a faster rate.

It will take all the necessary measures to reduce unemployment and will be more firm to ensure peace and stability in the country, he said.