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A prosperous year it was for Malaysia

Fariz Muda Azizi

LIKE the previous years, in 1996, Malaysia made its mark again as one of the most dynamic countries in the world.

We have seen many successes and historic moments, coupled with the rapid development of our country which will continue under the leadership of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad as we march towards the next millennium.

Our initial success last year was the launch of Malaysia-East Asia Satellite-1 on Jan 13. The satellite, which was successfully launched into orbit from Kourou, French Guiana, not only showed the world Malaysia's development in telecommunications technology but also brought Malaysia into the information age.

As its objective is to provide numerous channels of telecommunications, Malaysians of all races will benefit from the project.

Measat-2, which was launched on Nov 13, is scheduled to begin operations early this year.

Menara Kuala Lumpur is another symbol of success for Malaysians. The tower, the fourth highest building in the world, stands tall at 421 metres.

Equipped with sophisticated equipment, the tower operates as a high-technology telecommunications facility, besides playing the role as a tourist attraction where visitors can get a bird's eye view of the Federal capital.

It also depicts Malaysia as a dynamic and progressive nation, where the economic and industrial developments are highly competitive, but shared by all Malaysians in terms of unity.

Besides the country's harmony and racial equality as well as its rapid development, economic stability has contributed much to Malaysia's success.

For the eighth consecutive year, our country has registered an annual growth rate of more than eight per cent.

Compared with 1985 when the growth rate was a meagre one per cent, this expansion has given a boost to our gross domestic product which would double every decade, if the annual growth rate is kept at a stable level or the current rate.

This remarkable progress has automatically advanced the use of the national language, not just within our region, but also across the world.

Besides that, the use of Bahasa Malaysia by Tan Sri Razali Ismail in his speech during the United Nations General Assembly (after being elected as president) has shown the world the importance of our national language.

His thoughtful initiative is considered to have upgraded our national language around the world.

In spite of all this progress, we should not forget the man who has been responsible for bringing our nation to this status - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

A man of vision, he has made numerous contributions for the benefit of the people and country.

Last year also marked his 15th year as Prime Minister. Dr Mahathir has achieved many goals during his career as a politician, making him one of the greatest leaders in the world.

His policies and views are often taken seriously as we have seen him making an impact all over the world, for example, his crusade against

Western domination to ensure peace, harmony and unity.

He has successfully improved the image of the Malays from what they were once considered as an unprogressive and lazy race.

He is a symbol of pride among Malaysians; a worthy statesman to be followed, where his voice is heard and his presence felt.

In view of his achievements and effectiveness in the government machinery, the Prime Minister has been proclaimed as "The Father of Vision".

He is indeed the will, might and wisdom of our robust nation.

Malaysians have much to be proud of our leaders and the country's achievements in various fields.

Lastly, I hope our country will be able to maintain its perseverance and solidarity in the years to come.

Fariz Muda Azizi

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