

Unity vital in times of difficulty

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MALAYSIANS of Indian origin celebrated Deepavali for the second time in the midst of our economic crisis.

Unlike last year they hoped, along with their other Malaysian friends, that this Festival of Lights would bring light to the country for an early economic recovery.

Nothing pleases Malaysians more than an early recovery.

In this connection although there are signs of recovery and some improvements arising from currency controls and other measures, much more needs to be done.

The successful implementation of the National Economic Recovery Plan and its six core objectives is also vital for our recovery.

During difficult economic situations it is obvious that sacrifices, unity, and discipline are needed to overcome the problems.

A relevant point was made by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad when he pointed out in his Deepavali message that the unity and discipline among the different races

had helped Malaysia weather the problems caused by the ringgit's depreciation and drop in the value of the share market.

The call for sacrifice requires us to put a stop to all forms of extravagance and wastage and the people must spend wisely and prudently.

Besides the economic issues which are of concern to us, the significance of festive celebrations in our multiracial and multi-religious nation lies in instilling the spirit of unity among Malaysians of diverse races, cultures, and religions.

Malaysians must understand that while their spirit of tolerance and understanding has been recognised as a major factor in the nation's stability, they must continually take steps to reinforce that spirit.

It is necessary to further strengthen ethnic relations and understanding which have long steered the country towards the path of progress and prosperity.

In times of economic difficulties, unity of the people is of paramount importance to cope with the many challenges facing the nation.

Equally important is the patriotic spirit of Malaysians which can be expressed in many forms, such as supporting the "Buy Malaysian" campaign.

Patriotic Malaysians should not dishonour their country overseas but should resort to appropriate channels to express their dissent.

The Parliament is an appropriate forum to discuss issues and problems affecting our nation.

Furthermore, there is the general election where once in five years the people elect their representatives to Parliament as well as determine the ruling party to manage the affairs of the nation.

The wishes of the people can, therefore, be expressed through the ballot box.

There is no necessity to take issues and problems to the streets.

We do not need disturbances and chaos or, for that matter, international condemnation and trade sanctions.

It is imperative that Malaysians of all races work for racial and religious harmony, and enhance efforts to promote

understanding and unity which are vital for our economic recovery and nationbuilding.

Another important aspect of handling the present economic crisis and related problems is crisis management.

In this connection, it is only appropriate to enhance the ability of senior government officers to handle crises by focusing on problem-solving.

In difficult economic times, many problems are likely to surface and it is imperative that all government officers be on the alert and take appropriate and fast preventive action.

Problems like the water shortage experienced by Klang Valley residents, and situations like the haze, open burning, illegal immigrants and street protests or demonstrations need to be handled and resolved speedily.

Therefore, training officers to handle crises should be regarded a priority as we brace ourselves to face the many challenges that lie ahead.

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