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Buy Malaysian to show love for the country

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NOW that the 'Buy Malaysian' campaign has progressed into a 'Love Malaysia' campaign, it is perhaps time for all Malaysians to reflect on what 1997 had brought and what is in store for the country in the New Year.

We certainly had an eventful year. It was extraordinary to say the least. This year may be even more so. Pressures on our currency and capital market may not ease off in the next few weeks. It may take several months before we can see the situation stabilising.

Again, whether the situation stabilises depends a lot on the sum total of all our activities, actions, utterances and ultimately, our productivity and competitiveness as a sovereign economy.

If national resilience used to be a theme for Merdeka celebrations in the past, it is a very much needed trait now.

The fact that the 'Love Malaysia' campaign has been endorsed by people from various trades and industries as well as by the major media groups is a step in the right direction.

Lest we forget, this is only the start and not the end.

What remains to be seen is whether the campaign has really won the hearts and minds of the people. Love is after all an affair of the heart, isn't it?

The Government has undoubtedly taken the lead in making Malaysians realise the folly of worshipping all things imported. Malaysian goods are just as good if not better.

As any management guru will expound, one must be solution-driven. If we buy Malaysian goods which are not up to our expectations, the solution is not to turn to the imported stuff. We should reject the inferior ones and support the quality goods.

That way, market forces of supply and demand will weed out the bad apples in industry and services. If consumers do not insist on quality, manufacturers of goods and suppliers of services will not buck up.

Quality is a two-way matter. If Malaysian consumers accept certain low standards, then more such goods will be produced. As for services, if poor service is tolerated, the providers of such poor service will proliferate and even prosper.

Malaysian consumers should now insist on the best in quality of goods and services from Malaysian manufacturers and service providers. All the more so now when using imported goods and services means straining our balance of payments position.

This will be part of the national resilience coming to the fore and bearing the brunt of the problems brought about by currency and stock speculation and manipulation.

With the Government already leading the way, perhaps civil servants should also be instructed to be more business-friendly, especially to the small businessman.

Small- and medium-scale industrialists today still face a myriad of problems related to bureaucracy. Besides red tape, there are still many civil servants with the age-old mentality and attitude that makes life difficult for entrepreneurs.

Many of the problems are related to local council approvals and State Government matters concerning land or zoning of industries. Uneven enforcement or application of the law in different areas will confuse the

genuine entrepreneurs starting out in business.

Perhaps the Federal Government should come out with clear guidelines as to what needs to be done to help small industrialists and entrepreneurs. And see that the message filters down to the local councils through the State Government.

Kudos must go to Tan Sri Lee Kim Yew's Mines Resort complex in Sungei Besi, Selangor for providing the venue without any charge for Malaysian goods to be displayed under the 'Love Malaysia' campaign.

Perhaps, local councils can emulate his example and conduct similar campaigns at their level. Of course, this will entail more work but how else can one show commitment to the "Bigger Picture" and larger national agenda?

TALKING POINT: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad did well with the Malaysia Inc concept which got many civil servants feeling they are part of the national body corporate. 'Love Malaysia' also includes loving Malaysia Inc. The humble small entrepreneur is certainly part of this Malaysia Inc. So love him.

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