

25/12/1999

Economic recovery enhances Xmas joy, says Dr M

KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the country's recovery from the economic crisis of 1997 gives special significance to Malaysians celebrating the last Christmas of the century tomorrow.

"We should be thankful that Malaysians at large have been spared from undesirable consequences of the economic crisis which affected the region since 1997," Dr Mahathir said in his Christmas message released today.

Christmas celebrations in Malaysia have always been joyous because of the strong racial and religious harmony which was not at all jeopardised by the economic crisis, he added.

The Prime Minister said Malaysia, adopting its own measures including capital controls, had warded off attacks on the stock and currency markets by foreign manipulators.

"Although others mostly belittle our capabilities, we've proven that with conviction we can accomplish whatever we set out to do.

"We should be proud of our capabilities. We had no need for foreign interference or tutelage in determining our destiny," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the people's solid support made the Government all the more determined to strive for greater national advancement and safeguard the country from attempts to negate its achievements.

"Clearly, the steps taken by the Government to narrow the gap between communities have been fruitful and have effectively diminished the possibility of racial tension arising from economic disparity," he said.

The Prime Minister urged Malaysians to visit one another saying that although Muslims are observing Ramadan and could not enjoy daytime meals they could still call on Christian friends in the spirit of yuletide.

Dr Mahathir and wife Datuk Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamed Ali wished all Malaysian Christians a merry Christmas.

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