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Prophets of doom have been silenced

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PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's statement that the Government expects the gross domestic product (GDP) to grow from the one per cent forecast this year to five per cent next year is indeed heartening.

Besides the overall speculation for Asian economic recovery, this indicates that the prudent financial planning and fiscal management on the part of the Government is paying off.

Prophets of doom who painted a very gloomy picture of the nation's future have thus been silenced.

People who remain sceptical of these facts because they are derived from Government sources should also note the following:

- \* The positive outlook declared by the US-Asean Business Council recently in Kuala Lumpur and their intention to encourage further US investment in Malaysia;

- \* The optimism expressed in the Far East Economic Review for the rapid recovery of Malaysia and South Korea in particular;

- \* The upgrading of this country from "negative" to "stable" by no less than two international rating agencies, Standard & Poor's and Moody's International Service;

- \* The Asian Development Bank's forecast of at least a 0.7 per cent growth rate for Malaysia;

- \* An IMF estimated growth rate for the nation of 0.9 per cent for 1999 and 2.0 per cent for 2000;

- \* US Treasury Secretary James Rubin's statement that Malaysia has instituted real financial reform despite capital controls. He further said that while capital controls in itself, if not administered properly, could lead to corruption, this was certainly not the case in Malaysia.

- \* Recent surges in the share market which, at 630+ (composite index), has reached a 12-month high.

Although the people can take some comfort in these facts, it would be advisable to still exercise caution as we are not out of the woods yet. Measures instituted by the Government have to be maintained until a full turn-around is realised.

Malaysians are to be congratulated for heeding the call to be thrifty in their spending habits, buying local goods and increasing savings. These steps have, in no small measure, assisted Government efforts in forging economic recovery.

Unfortunately, there remain small groups of undesirable elements who are unhappy over these positive indicators of recovery as it does not suit their political agenda in vilifying the Government.

To them, economic recovery and the resultant general well-being of the citizens of Malaysia will dash their hopes of gaining political mileage.

The people are reminded to be wary of such forces with despicable intentions who might even try to distort facts for their own selfish purposes.

The people and the Government are also urged to look carefully at inflation which has to be contained.

It must be admitted that there has been a rise in prices of many items of late, and this trend has to be checked.

If inflation is addressed efficiently, then, together with the optimistic outlook, there is no reason for Malaysia not to bounce back and

progress unhindered to achieve the objectives of Vision 2020.