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A bright future ahead

A CENTURY has passed. Our journey, as an independent nation, began with the task of preserving and defending the country's sovereignty. A task which our forefathers failed during the era of the Malacca Sultanate and unfortunately, this failure is repeated during the bleak period of British colonisation. The failures in the past were redeemed by our forefathers who fought for freedom and won our independence.

It is true that we have been spared the effusion of blood in our struggles. But this does not make them any less painful. We have learned the hard way that complacency is a sin and no nation should assume success in safeguarding its liberty. As pointed out by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad in his New Year address, we should reflect on the country's history so that we will know whence and whither we come from, where we are now and where we are headed.

The nation's history contains instructive admonitions, warnings of snake pits to be shunned and lessons to be learned. The Malacca Sultanate was defeated by lack of strategy, discipline and poor leadership as well as the treachery of some within the palace. The lesson is potent for us all. An enemy in the rear is more dangerous than an enemy in front. Traitors from amongst us are worse than the enemies themselves.

History, too, counsels caution. Our response to new forms of dangers require new crossbreeds of wisdom. As articulated by Dr Mahathir, globalisation bears the face of colonialism. Liberalisation, as advocated by the neo-liberalists in its present form, will impoverish nations and their peoples. We had a taste of it in the summer of 1997 when decades of growth was destroyed and threatened to put an end to Asia's era of pride and newly-won self-esteem. As he said in his book, A New Deal for Asia, "We cannot move on without knowing why this happened. We cannot regain faith in the future and return to the vision of a new millennium unless we discover how to defend ourselves against the forces of sudden economic attacks." We put ourselves on this journey of discovery after the fateful summer to find the means to defend our monetary sovereignty.

We have achieved much as we have a statesman in Dr Mahathir who is able to summon the nation to its finest hours - alerting the people of the dangers and opportunities and demanding of them the sacrifices that will be necessary for the nation's cause. The new millennium bears both challenges and promises. As it has been with our forefathers who began this journey towards nationhood, our primary task is to preserve the country's sovereignty and fight against the resurrection of imperialism. As long as we know our roots, unite and persevere, no obstacle is insurmountable. So it was in the beginning. So it shall always be as long as we are strong enough to keep our faith in this nation.

The closing year has been replete with blessings for which we owe to God our reverent acknowledgement. For the uninterrupted harmony of the country, the fair and ample harvest of our economic endeavours, the resilience of our enterprise, the end of the recession and the recovery of our economy, the prevalence of health, the growth of the country in all elements - for these and countless other blessings we should rejoice and be glad. We join the nation in its prayer for tranquillity, unity and prosperity in the new millennium. Happy New Millennium.

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