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Dare to be different

IT takes new thinking and approaches to succeed in the 21st Century. Doing this requires leadership and risk taking against established attitudes and practices.

And the fact that Malaysia has taken steps to tackle the challenges of the new millennium has invited gloom-and-doom predictions.

Responding to the prophets of doom who have repeatedly raised negative sentiments about Malaysia's investment in high-tech projects, notably the Multimedia Super Corridor and Cyberjaya, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said, "All these projects have proven to be successful. Is there any reason to believe these nay sayers now, when they have been wrong every time in the past?"

History has shown that the gloom and doom prophets are seldom right. They thrive on predicting disasters on the horizon. They give potentially destructive advice but deny responsibility if their predictions are wrong. They know that their prophecy of doom will sell books, magazines and newsletters.

But, the truth is, nobody can accurately predict the future. And if we listen to them, we do so at our own peril. Yet, there are many who do and the result can sometimes be self-fulfilling. Those with a pessimistic outlook on life take this kind of foolishness to heart and allow their lives to be stunted by the gloom-and-doom prophets.

The success of such ventures as Malaysia's car project, the new Kuala Lumpur International Airport, the Kuala Lumpur City Centre and the capital control measures that saved Malaysia during the Asian economic crisis proves only one thing - that Malaysia believes in shaping its own destiny.

And in embracing Information Technology in a big way as reflected in the development of the Multimedia Super Corridor and Cyberjaya, Malaysia has made the doomsayers active again.

It takes a far-sighted leadership to create a future that most can barely imagine. By initiating these high-tech projects, Malaysia is equipping itself for success in the 21st Century.

As today's economy makes the transition to a "knowledge economy" or an "information society", there is a need to recognise that the rules of the new game will be vastly different from those of the industrial economy of the last century. The principles and practices of an industrial economy need rewriting in an interconnected world where know-how is more critical than other economic resources.

The new global economy ushers in extraordinary times requiring extraordinary leadership.

In the quest to create a more resilient and competitive Malaysia, this leadership must be shared by both the Government and the private sector.

The new economy requires knowledge workers who must be prepared to be flexible, creative, innovative, receptive to new ideas and able to adapt to changing situations. Companies will be looking for the professional eclectic with the flexibility to be professional on many different levels and the ability to merge or converge different sets of skill.

The beginning of the new millennium is a time for renewal of our commitment to progress. We have successfully recovered from our worst recession and now the stage is set for our economy to accelerate into the future.

And no matter what the doomsayers say, we can certainly prepare for it.

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