

Dr Mahathir sends CNY greetings

Nst 10 FEB 2002

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KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. Though thousands of kilometres away from home in Antarctica, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad tonight wished all Malaysians a happy and prosperous Chinese New Year.

"I'm really sorry that I'm not in the country at the moment. Normally for Chinese New Year, I'm always in and make my visits and attend all the open house. I'm quite sure this year it will be a very grand celebration so I would like to wish all Malaysian Chinese a Happy Chinese New Year. *Gong Xi Fa Chai*."

"I miss this very much, really. I wish I was there, but this is my only chance to come here and I don't think I will be able to make this visit again. It's a once in a life time visit, so because of that, de-

spite having to miss Chinese New Year and even Hari Raya Haji, I decided to come." Dr Mahathir said in a satellite telephone call from Antarctica.

The Prime Minister, who is on a eight-day cruise to Antarctica, conveyed the message during his conversation with MCA president and Transport Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik.

Dr Mahathir, who is aboard the Russian ice-breaker *Kapitan Dranitsyn*, spoke to Dr Ling for about five minutes in a telephone arrangement made possible by Astro.

Dr Ling, who thanked Dr Mahathir for his thought, reported to the Prime Minister that Kuala Lumpur was in its usual festive mood, with traffic jams created by shoppers and those rushing to *batik kampung*.

Dr Mahathir also briefly related his experience cruising on a small boat among glaciers on the ice-covered continent.

"Yesterday, we landed and walked on the snow at a station that was run by the Argentine Government.

"It is deserted now, they have not conducted any research there for some time, but we also took this small boat and cruised around among the small icebergs to see the beauty of this wonderful continent," he said.

Dr Mahathir also shared some light moments with Dr Ling after the MCA president said the year of the Horse was "*Ma Nian*" in Mandarin.

"The horse is very intelligent, very strong and most important of all has a good sense of direction. This is the year of the horse, '*Ma Nian*', and we think this is also Mahathir's year ... so we are with you all the way."

Dr Mahathir replied that he was aware that the first two letters in his name meant "horse" in Mandarin.