

01/01/2002

Leaders call on Malaysians to preserve peace

KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. - Leaders of various organisations, including political parties, today called on Malaysians to preserve peace and harmony in the country and to learn from the Sept 11 terrorist attacks on the United States.

In their New Year messages, they said Malaysians should prepare for challenges of 2002 and beyond, especially those posed by globalisation.

MCA president Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik said the Sept 11 terrorist attacks had a deep impact on the country's economy but the Government had taken pre-emptive measures.

Dr Ling also urged the people to continue supporting the Barisan Nasional.

MIC president Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu said 2001 had been challenging and urged Malaysian Indians to use the Kampung Medan incident as a lesson to foster better relations with the other races.

"We are glad that the racial tension was solved through the tireless efforts of the leaders and security forces," he said.

Samy Vellu urged Indians to make use of the opportunities available to improve themselves.

Gerakan president Datuk Seri Dr Lim Keng Yaik said everyone should learn from events in the past year like the attacks on the World Trade Center in New York and the Al Ma'unah incident.

He said Europe would be sharing a common currency while China would be a member of the World Trade Organisation.

Malaysians, he said, should be ready to adapt to globalisation or they would be left behind.

Dr Lim, who is also Primary Industries Minister, urged Malaysians to uphold the spirit of muhibah.

People's Progressive Party president Datuk M. Kayveas said all Malaysians should work harder to preserve racial unity which was uniquely Malaysian.

"We have to understand and strive to achieve the Government's aspiration for a united bangsa Malaysia," he said.

Kayveas also urged Malaysians to support the Government in its efforts to ward off economic and security threats.

Sabah Chief Minister Datuk Chong Kah Kiat said Parti Bersatu Sabah's application to return to the BN augured well for Sabah.

"I believe with unity and less politicking, we can concentrate on working together to bring much needed development to Sabah and improve the life of Malaysians in the State," he said.

Chong also reminded the people to manage resources in a sustainable manner.

Reflecting on the past year, Chong said although 2001 was a difficult year, the State Government remained optimistic that the global economy would recover by the second-half of 2002.

"Let us resolve to do better and to improve on past achievements for the New Year.

"In doing so, we will be able to contribute more positively and effectively to make Sabah a peaceful, progressive and developed State," he said.

Penang Chief Minister Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon described 2002 as a crucial year for the implementation of various measures to overcome the

negative impact of global economic and political woes.

"Let us put aside our differences and work together more closely to overcome challenges, manage changes, promote sustainable and balanced development, create a caring society and ensure that peace and stability continue to prevail in the nation and in our State."

Kelantan Menteri Besar Datuk Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat said he hoped it would be a better year ahead, with the people given more room to speak up and the withdrawal of several restrictions.

"It is the right of the people to discuss things openly. Lately, it appears that this has been curtailed.

"There has been a restriction on ceramah although we practise democracy," he said.

Nik Aziz, who is also Pas' spiritual leader, said people must avoid using force and intimidation to achieve their objectives.

DAP national chairman Lim Kit Siang said he believed issues over the past year like the setting up of an Islamic state would continue to confront the nation.

All Malaysians, he said, should be wary of the dangers the nation faced and be vigilant against the attempts to take away the social contract provided for in the Constitution.

Parti Keadilan Nasional president Datin Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail said the Sept 11 tragedy should serve as a reminder on the importance of appreciating Malaysia's commonalities and celebrating our differences.

"In 2002, let us pledge to strengthen our determination and resolve in setting out avenues for greater understanding of each other's faith," she added.

Dr Wan Azizah said Malaysians had continued to struggle to achieve a meaningful multi-ethnic solidarity based on truth and justice.

Parti Rakyat Malaysia president Dr Syed Husin Ali said the terrorist attacks in the United States had created a strong impact worldwide.

He said in the period of uncertainties following the attacks, it was unfortunate that Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had declared Malaysia was an Islamic state.

Syed Husin added that the announcement had caused confusion and concern.

Meanwhile, Malaysian Trades Union Congress president Senator Zainal Rampak said as Malaysia faced an economic slowdown twice within five years, the Government should step up efforts to protect retrenched workers.

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