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Work towards maintaining racial harmony, unity

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AT midnight tomorrow, Malaysians will usher in 2003. My New Year message and resolution is: "Working towards promoting racial harmony and unity".

Racial harmony and unity are of paramount importance in a multi-ethnic society. Malaysia was forged out of diversity and through the spirit of give and take, compromise and consensus.

The Federal Constitution, which guarantees the rights of ethnic groups, and the Rukunegara are the guide for nation-building and have been accepted by all Malaysians since Independence.

Although Malaysia may not be perfect, it has weathered many storms and has laid the foundation for racial harmony, unity, cohesiveness and political stability.

Let us not destroy what we have achieved. Let us not allow extremism to divide the nation.

Malaysians are now in the midst of festive celebrations. The annual festive season - Deepavali, Hari Raya, Christmas and Chinese New Year - is an auspicious occasion for all races to cultivate harmony, goodwill, peace and unity.

Malaysians have every reason to be proud that they can celebrate various festivities in peace and harmony.

Many, particularly the younger generation, tend to take the country's racial harmony for granted. This should not be so. On the contrary, it is the duty of each to promote and preserve racial harmony and unity.

At a speech delivered in Kuching recently, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the Government would not assimilate the various races but continue with the policy of integration to ensure racial harmony and stability.

His statement should be welcomed by all Malaysians who are steadfast in their belief that the success of our multi-racial and multi-religious nation depends on the integration of diverse ethnic groups into one united and harmonious society.

As we step into another new year, let it be our resolve that no ethnic group should test the boundaries of harmony and unity by engaging in posturing and in making extremist demands.

Pursuing any racial agenda will only sow the seeds of discord and spell disaster.

Nation-building is no easy task. It is fraught with challenges and is a long process which requires mutual understanding and, above all, sacrifice and commitment.

Looking back, there is no doubt we have accomplished much in economic development, modernisation and information technology.

Even if economics and information technology are the driving force of this era and in the future, we must not lose sight of racial harmony and unity.

Malaysians should be more conscious of their roles and contributions towards national unity.

Economic development would not be meaningful without understanding, harmony, goodwill and trust among the people.

Programmes of action should continue to inculcate, nurture and strengthen the spirit of love and patriotism for the country.

The proposed National Service is one important vehicle which can help reinforce patriotism and strengthen racial harmony and unity.

