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Preserve peace and continue development, Dr M urges Malaysians

BY SA'ODAH ELIAS

PUTRAJAYA: Peace and stability are the only foolproof defences for Malaysia against becoming another victim of the worsening world scenario, said Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

In his New Year message aired over radio and television last night, the Prime Minister said:

"If we can preserve peace within our boundaries, we can concentrate our effort towards developing the country for the overall good of the people.

"Any government set up through illegal means will always be cruel and this would result in chaos that can weaken the country, allowing the possibility of it being controlled by others."

Malaysians, said Dr Mahathir, must have confidence in their own abilities and in the plans and strategies taken by the Government in tackling problems and developing the country.

"Malaysia is our country. This is where we were born, this is where we grew up, this is where we earn our living and this is where we are going to die.

"We are the ones who determine the success or failure of our country, so choose wisely because at stake is our very survival," he said.

The Prime Minister advised extreme groups to be sensitive towards all communities by refraining from making unreasonable

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demands that could jeopardise the stability of the country.

"Remember, extremism breeds more extremism. Confrontation between two extremes will never end in peace and development," he added.

Calling on all Malaysians to work together to preserve peace and harmony and to reject any kind of extremism, Dr Mahathir reminded them that those who harboured plans for violence, such as claiming their objective was to set up an Islamic state, were only out to dupe the people by appealing for sympathy and support to enable them to wrest power illegally.

Their approach, he said, was not valid. There was no reason for them to resort to violence to institute changes when they could do so through the democratic process.

"Our country is not like others' whose governments have failed to develop their countries, to address the problem of poverty and used strong arm tactics to retain power.

"In Malaysia, the people can always change the government through the ballot box.

"Thus, what is the need for violence to topple the government?

"Unless the intention is to set up a dictatorship that will deny the people their rights," he said.

"We in Malaysia cannot shake the world. We don't have the capability to correct the world.

"But we can determine our own fate, our security, development and growth.

"Our performance may not be as good as when the world is peaceful; but at least we can make sure that our fate is better than what has been predicted by those who hate us," he said.

The Prime Minister also called for a more cordial relationship between employers and workers, urging them against taking a confrontational stance.

"We must improve the standard of living of our workers, but at the same time we need to remember that our country is not fully developed yet.

"So, we cannot live like those who are fully developed.

"Don't use threats if your demands are not fulfilled. The ensuing chaos can increase costs to a point where even the rich will become poor," he added.