



WE celebrate our 66th National Day today, and soon, we will mark our 60th Malaysia Day.

I first started sharing my thoughts on our country two years ago, at a time when we were hit by the pandemic.

This year, we really have something to be optimistic about.

Over the past 12 months, we have had a general election and then elections across six states.

The democratic process was respected throughout, and was followed by a peaceful transition of power at the federal level.

Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim was appointed prime minister of Malaysia on Nov 24, 2022, after five days of uncertainties following the conclusion of the 15th general election which resulted in a hung parliament.

The wisdom and guidance of our Yang di-Pertuan Agong Al-Sultan Abdullah Ri'ayatuddin Al-Mustafa Billah Shah brought us some much-needed political stability now that we have a duly elected fifth prime minister in just under five years.

Like most Malaysians, my hope is that we can now lower the political temperature and work on putting Malaysia back on the right track.

However, certain politicians do not appear to have received, or are deliberately ignoring, the message delivered by the voters and our monarch.

This is of serious concern, given the global headwinds that we face. Soaring inflation, deepening polarisation and widening inequalities pose major challenges worldwide.

In addition, the war raging in Europe, the growing US-China tensions, and the rapid advance of technology all make for a time of extreme uncertainty.

Above all looms climate change, which poses a threat to the very survival of humanity. Our planet is both literally burning up and drowning.

As UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said: "The era of global warming has ended. The era of global boiling has arrived."

We must get our act together, fast.

On the political front, the Unity Government has now been in

Dear Malaysia

Let's work on putting our nation back on track



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place for nine months.

It came into power with promises of reform to reshape a country scarred by corruption, deformed by inequality, and polarised by racial and religious extremism.

As they say: "A promise is like a pregnancy. At some point, you must deliver."

The government has started off well by rolling out several institutional reforms.

These include assuring judicial independence and ensuring our enforcement agencies carry out their roles without fear or

favour.

It will take some time for these reforms to become truly effective, but they send a powerful signal that the government is determined to act on its promises.

In particular, I welcome the Prime Minister's commitment to crack down on corruption, which has become endemic in our country.

Of course, Datuk Seri Anwar does not have an entirely free hand given the political realities and economic challenges.

Nevertheless, the Madani concept outlined by the Prime

Minister represents a shift in the policies, strategies and direction of the country's economy.

Beyond just GDP growth, it also emphasises social and cultural factors in building a more equitable Malaysia.

However, the more immediate need is for the government to fully focus on resolving cost-of-living issues.

It is hard for a lay person to relate to broad national policies when one is stressed out by everyday issues such as finding a decent job, figuring out how to pay rent or loans, or wondering

how to put food on the family table.

Resolving the people's livelihood concerns will also help gain the government much-needed support to further strengthen the country's political and economic stability.

This is especially important to help counter the extremist voices on matters of race and religion.

Social media obviously plays a key role in spreading these divisive, disruptive and inflammatory messages by certain individuals.

Left unchecked, this will definitely tear apart the bonds that bind our multi-racial, multi-religious and multi-cultural society.

If we are to realise our dreams of building a more progressive, sustainable, just and inclusive Malaysia, our discussions on the state of the nation must be conducted with sincerity, respect and decency.

My dear fellow Malaysians, let compassion, justice, fairness and humility guide us in this mission.

We are all in this together.

To quote our founding prime minister, the late Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra Al-Haj: "We are all Malaysians. This is the bond that unites us. Let us always remember that unity is our fundamental strength as a people and as a nation."

Selamat Hari Kebangsaan.

**Tan Sri Dr Jeffrey Cheah AO
A hopeful citizen of Malaysia**