

NEW YEAR MESSAGE FROM THE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER ON 29TH DECEMBER, 1961

I wish everyone a Happy New Year. The New Year will mark the revival of the old Semangat or spirit of self-reliance among our people. It is this spirit or Semangat Merdeka that will ensure the steady progress of our young country in the years to come.

For nearly a hundred years this spirit was submerged under foreign domination. After independence the Alliance Government made it its first task to dig through the overburden of foreign influences and bring to earth this old Semangat which should now be known as "Semangat Merdeka".

That was the first phase of the Rural Development Programme in which the Government geared all its departments to work together as a team; produced a definite development plan for each State and District; streamlined the system of land administration and gave the Rural and Industrial Development Authority new roles and responsibilities.

In this Rural Development Programme the Government has provided and will continue to provide roads, bridges, water supplies, electricity, schools, health centres and other amenities in the rural areas so that the kampung folk can enjoy those amenities that are essential for a civilised society. While the Government has discharged and is discharging its responsibilities by providing these amenities, it is the responsibility of the rural people themselves to increase their individual earnings and improve their standard of living.

In independent Malaya the frontier is the jungle and undeveloped areas and here lies the potential wealth of our country. In order to win the battle in this frontier, the pioneer spirit or Semangat Merdeka is needed. Those intrepid people, who are settled in the newly cleared jungle land, are the pioneers blazing the trail of the national productive effort and laying the foundations for the new towns and villages of the future. It must be remembered that a hundred years ago the big towns and cities of the west coast were virgin jungle. Through the pioneering efforts of our forefathers these towns and centres of productivity came into being.

Through the Government Rural Development Programme this process is being repeated in the hinterland and the east coast of Malaya. Those actively participating in this programme are not simply Government servants carrying out orders, and landless people in search of a better life. They are, in fact, the makers of history for future generations. They are the people imbued with the "Semangat Merdeka" that propels them forward to fashion out the jungle, new towns, villages and productive centres for their children and children's children.

No longer should our people take the challenge of the jungle passively. The jungle must be regarded as guarding the reserves of our natural wealth, and the time has come for us to bring this wealth into use to serve our national economy. A nation, to be strong and progressive, must look inwards for its own strength. A nation is the sum total of all its individual citizens, and only if every citizen of our country is self-reliant and able to fashion out his own future can we build a self-reliant nation, and thus earn the respect of the world.

I hope in the New Year all Malayans will be so imbued with this pioneer spirit or Semangat Merdeka and the vision of jungles giving way to new towns, villages, farms and factories that they will work with greater determination to bring about a more prosperous, happy and contented Malaya.