

2013

TIME flies. Another year has gone. A reflection of the past year may yet again reveal the many resolutions made at the beginning of the year not accomplished at the end of the year. Many would justify their reasons but in the end, these are mere excuses.

How did you end your year? 2012 was a year which did not fulfill its promises we all intended for. The biggest challenge would definitely be our own self belief and our own conviction to make that move in the intended direction.

The most intriguing change has to be the weather. The weather has never been so unpredictable. When one thinks that it is a hot and dry season, it rains. When one expects rain, we get thunderstorms or at worst, a hot and dry spell.

The general feeling of all the festivities in Malaysia can be generalized as being lukewarm. I had never experienced such a phenomenon in my life before where all festivities from Chinese New Year to Wesak, Deepavali, Hari Raya and to Christmas where the mood had taken a beating.

What has happened? It seemed like the doomsday, end of the world and end Calendar date of the Mayans of 21-12-12 had been spread throughout the year.

We all survived though. I am still here writing you this piece. I think the world has changed. The environment has changed. We must fear for our future if we continue to go the same direction with a nonchalant lackadaisical attitude.

The current economic situation in the global arena does not look rosy. China is coming to grips with a fast expanding economy where the divide between the rich and the poor is fast expanding. The USA is reviewing its fiscal policy where the government is being challenged with huge debts. Their debt to GDP ratio is now above 100%. Even Japan is being challenged by their increasing borrowings to fund their economy. This is due to the recent issues with the Fukushima nuclear plant and the dilemma of nuclear power to run the industries. Moreover, it is well known that Japan's main concern is the maintenance of the ageing population.

The European scenario is looking glum. Greece is already heading towards dire straits with a shrinking economy. Many have left their jobs because these jobs are no longer feasible. They turn to agriculture to feed themselves. Even Italy is having a hard time with the Prime Minister resigning for failing to lift the economy.

The situation in the Middle East is alarming as with North Africa. The political use of religion has once again created a social divide amongst cultures and nations. Where that is absent, the spread of public dissatisfaction continues to cripple the economy. This affects the fossil fuel prices which will affect industries.

Whilst USA, China and Japan remain the largest global economies, their current situation would most likely be stagnant in 2013. The main focus would be the growing economies of BRIC (Brazil, China and India).

Where does Malaysia stand in ensuring the economic growth? We have seen projects being kick started. The only one that seemed to have stalled is the flood mitigation projects as with the Klang Valley, floods continue to reoccur. In Kuantan, for the first time since 1970s, the township was flooded in December. We hear the same for the East Coast States of Kelantan and Terengganu

as well as Johor.

The government has embarked on a public transport investment with the new LRT extension line and a new MRT. In a few years we would have an LRT, an MRT and a Monorail in Klang Valley. But, sadly, in Putrajaya and Cyberjaya, there seems to be a lull. The only activity in Cyberjaya is the property development. The same can be said with Penang as well as the Iskandar region in Johor.

Whilst public transportation remains a welcome relief, many of us will wonder if there would be a concerted effort in ensuring the facilities and services of taxis, buses and trains are done effectively and efficiently. Sadly, this is yet to be experienced.

2012 in Malaysia also saw the dissatisfaction of the public with regards to radioactive wastes as well as the creation of dams without care for the livelihood of the people. The public have also voiced concerns of the increasing debt and the escalating property prices. Many point this to the lack of immigration control to a point where non-citizens also enjoy the benefits of citizens without discrimination.

Some will say that this is okay as they have done their bit in working and contributing here but many others will say their presence ensures costs are low whilst creating a situation where Malaysians will all reap profits.

I tend to agree if we do this for talents and knowledge exchange but not for ease of profits by removing the economic viability of such jobs for the citizens. This would be a dangerous act as this would also create a possibility of a non-citizen run economy.

We continue to see the current education system in a flux with issues with the English language. The current education system has turned into a business and not as an education investment. Even Bahasa Malaysia has more English words in them today than 10 years ago.

Real estate prices have gone up and with many food items on the rise, it looks like much will become dear and many will not be able to afford. Short term subsidies will not be the solution as with price controls. There is a need for a rigorous plan to invest for the future and not take short cuts. The people need to be the power to change.

2013 will be election year. We have to review what has happened and what the global economic and political situation is showing us currently. It will be an even tougher 2013 compared to 2012, I predict.



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