

March 21 means ..

THERE are only a few days left before we celebrate the first anniversary of our hard-won independence. It was 12 months ago when the popular ruling party, Swapo, the then liberation movement which gallantly fought and defeated the then notorious forces of occupation at the battlefield as well as the ballot box, adopted the policy of national reconciliation, the policy of forgiveness and focus on the future.

First of all, let us examine the significance of March 21. The date is and will remain an illuminating day, in the Namibian calendar. Illuminating in the sense that it is the day on which the yoke of colonialism, which was imposed on us, was buried for ever.

It was the day on which dignitaries from all over the world joined the brave sons and daughters of this country to witness the burial of colonialism by replacing the South African flag with that of the new Republic of Namibia.

It was a wonderful and moving occasion, which present and future generations will never forget. It was a day on which the nationalist fighters stood hand in hand and said 'look, our sacrifices have not been in vain'.

As the freedom fighters were rejoicing, those who fought against the emergence of democracy stood with their hands on their heads.

Why was it necessary to adopt the policy of national reconciliation? The movement's aims and objectives were to liberate this country from the then forces of colonial oppression and establish a government founded upon the will and participation of the Namibian people.

Having achieved that, the leadership of Swapo was well aware that there had been local Namibians who were collaborating with the then notorious

colonial regime with the view of preventing the achievement of democracy. With this in mind, Swapo opted for a policy of national reconciliation which is humane and suitable for Namibians.

The most striking aspect of the policy is that it promotes the values of equality and human dignity. It intends to unite the Namibian people irrespective of colour, race, nationality or origin. This policy deserves our respect.

Many have complained about the negative aspects of national reconciliation but little has been heard about its merits.

The success of the policy depends on the performances of those implementing it. The merits of this policy are more than its demerits. This policy is, in my view, meant to provide a breathing space for those harbouring illusions about the past colonial system to adjust themselves to a new era of national independence, peace, stability and the humane approach.

As we rejoiced on March 21 last year, we were equally worried about what we had inherited from the then notorious colonial regime in terms of debt, unemployment and political instability (the latter with regard to tendencies of tribalism and racial discrimination based on colour).

The problem is, how are we going to pay the so-called debt without economic prosperity, and how are we going to combat the already deteriorating unemployment situation without economic growth?

The government's efforts to combat the unemployment situation will be meaningless unless accompanied by the will and voluntary participation of the 'haves' of our society.

We expected the electronic and print media to play a major role in shaping the destiny of our people. But at the moment, its efforts are feeble because we are divided. We have just

emerged from a unique colonial system, a system in which our people were taught to behave in a tribalistic manner. This evil system has contaminated the minds of some members of our society, making it difficult for them to adjust to the new era of independence. The media should be offering guidance to our people to create for them opportunities to rebuild their self-respect, restore their faith and rediscover for themselves their human dignity. Regional radio stations should be utilised for the benefit of people in those regions.

One of the Government's main priorities is education. It is the finest foundation of all for the nation-building process. It is also the cornerstone upon which to rest our surest hopes to build our young Republic.

As we approach the first anniversary of independence, we need to be devoted to the cause of national building through the process of national reconciliation.

Failure to implement this positively will effect the concept of democracy in this country.

We cannot achieve any of these objectives unless we are hardworking, disciplined, law-abiding and implement the policy of national reconciliation in a positive light.

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Equal treatment

I WOULD like to say something about treatment in Uis, north-western Namibia. The closure of Imcor tin mine has touched the whole community here.

When we talk about reconciliation, then we don't believe only the blacks should participate, but also white residents, in order for national reconciliation and nation build-