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Be disciplined, keep costs low: Mahathir

Kamarul Yunus

MALAYSIAN businessmen should be disciplined, keep cost low and prevent from profiteering to ease over the present currency problem faced by the nation, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said.

In fact, he said, the businessmen should be more responsible because they had a debt to society in facing the problem.

"This is because the society makes it possible for them to make the kind of money they have been making now.

"Some people think that this is the opportunity to make money for themselves. "What happens to the country does not matter to them," he said at the launching of the RORO catamaran MV SuperStar Express, a cruise liner owned by Star Cruises in Langkawi yesterday.

Dr Mahathir said businessmen must not forget that all citizens had contributed to the kind of society that we have leading to the success of business brought about by the healthy political and investment climate.

He said if there are upheavals like demonstrations by the people or a Government unsympathetic towards business, they could not be what they are today.

"It was therefore timely and appropriate for them to repay their debt to the people in times of difficulty like the present depreciation of currency value," he added.

In acknowledging the success of the Star Cruises liners, Dr Mahathir said in order to make good profit, a businessman must make a sacrifice to invest a lot of capital.

"It was a misconception that one could make a big money with little investment," he added.

On the RM150 million MV SuperStar Express, which started plying from Langkawi to Penang last week, Dr Mahathir said the service will provide an alternative means of transport for those wanting to visit Langkawi from Penang and southern Thailand.

With a speed of 42 knots per hour, he said travelling cost will be reduce as visitors can also bring their own cars using the vessel.

The high-speed catamaran can ferry 900 passengers and 175 cars and it will later extend its service to Phuket.

Dr Mahathir praised the operators for their gesture in reducing the fares by 50 per cent during the school holidays.

The discount will be made available until January 4 next year.

Later, Dr Mahathir officiated at the launching of an attempt by the catamaran to break the world record for the fastest round the world trip by the sea.

The journey will start from Port Klang in June next year, calling at 10 ports within 48 days in a bid to break the previous record by the US submarine USS Triton which made the journey in 83 days.

A trophy called the Prime Ministers' Trophy (named after the past, present and future prime ministers) is being awarded for this race and for others who may want to break the record. The Prime Minister later took a short journey in the high-speed vessel around Tanjung Malai.

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