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#### BUSINESS COMMUNITY WELCOMES NEAC

By: Muammar Kamaruddin, Yati Mohd Yassin and Siti Hawa Othman

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 21 (Bernama) -- The Malaysian business community has welcomed the formation of the National Economic Action Council (NEAC), saying such a body was vital in dealing swiftly with the current economic problems.

Some corporate analysts said it should have been formed even earlier to tackle head-on issues confronting the country, while others said the people should not expect solutions overnight.

Anthony Dass, senior economist for research of TA Securities Bhd, said the council would be like a watchdog to monitor the issues highlighted by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad yesterday and look to ways to rectify problems.

He said the NEAC was a good idea to monitor the inflation rate, address the current account deficit as well as improve national productivity, adding a positive impact would not come overnight but after a few months.

The idea of the private and public sector combining forces was positive as it would be able to iron out the problems at a faster rate, he said.

Tan Sri Ramon Navaratnam, Advisor of Sungeiway Group said the setting up of the action panel was very innovative and constructive move by the government, which was different from the budget dialogue, Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI) dialogue as well as the Malaysian Business Council.

These dialogues and MBC were more to serve members' interests but the action panel would be different, he said, adding that "MBC's business interests may not be consistent to national economic interests as they will emphasis on business, which will lead to more imports and balance of payment problems," he said.

There was a need to have a new council which was more representative and able to meet more frequently, he said, adding that even the MBC might not be able to handle issues effectively on broad economic management.

Professionals, economists, businessmen, trade experts and consumer representatives should sit on the council as they would be more keen on serving national rather than personal interests, he said.

The council should be focussed on monitoring and providing consistent feedback so as to enable the government to formulate more dynamic policies, taking into account the rapidly changing economic, financial and monetary developments around the world, Navaratnam said.

"As we are moving into globalisation, we must be more alert and listen carefully to what others think of us. We can't afford to be complecent about other people's view of us although they were compounded and not fair," he said.

"In the real world, he said those who command financial resources carry the big stick and Malaysia must learn how to defend and counter-attack," he said.

An analyst, while supporting the formation of the NEAC, said that the government should have come out with clear terms about the council, its purpose, specific objectives and council members.

In only naming the council members about a month from now, it might allow for further adverse speculation on the country's economy, he said, adding it should have been formed much earlier when negative perceptions ran high.

He said there seems to be a crisis as far as the perception of an

outsider was concerned even though the current domestic situation was  
nowhere near a crisis situation. -- BERNAMA  
MK YY SHO