

20 DEC 1997

CURB FRUSTRATIONS OVER THE ECONOMIC SITUATION, SAYS PM

KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 20 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today that rash actions will not help the country overcome the economic problems caused by the depreciation of the ringgit and the stock market crash.

He said that such actions driven by frustrations would only lead to rifts and divisions and would destroy the spirit of unity much needed during the hard times the country was experiencing.

"I am confident that if we are prepared to discipline and curb ourselves from resorting to rash actions and abide by the policies and principles of our nation's struggles, God willing we will be able to overcome them.

"But if we were caught up by our frustrations over the situation and put the blame on the government for instance or if we were to start accusing others, then we will have disagreements and this will indirectly make us weak," he said at the pledge-taking by officers and staff of the Information Ministry at Angkasapuri here.

Dr Mahathir was at Angkasapuri to record his New Year message and launch Radio 8, run by the Information Department.

The Prime Minister said that the problems faced by the country could be overcome only through a higher degree of discipline and loyalty, not through foreign assistance.

Citing the sacrifices made by the womenfolk in South Korea by donating one ton of their gold accessories to help revive small and medium businesses in their country, he said that such a spirit could help in the recovery of the country's economy.

"It proves that mutual help is most essential. If we were to help others today, it may be their turn to help us tomorrow.

"This is the spirit which could destroy the attempts by others to retard the growth of our economy, making us poor like before to colonise us through their economic power.

Dr Mahathir said that the economic situation in South Korea was worse than Malaysia with the value of its currency having dropped by more than 100 per cent but it was clear that its people were prepared to make sacrifices to help revive its economy.

He said that the government had drawn up a plan to overcome the economic problems in the country but it was not a policy or legislation and the success of its implementation depended on the cooperation of every individual in the country.

In this respect, the Prime Minister said that government employees would surely now have a heavier responsibility to make it a success while others should always strive to safeguard unity in the country.

"This is our hope and the pledge given will ensure that we will all work hard and be united in facing the problem," he said, referring to the loyalty pledge taken by some 700 officers and staff of the ministry and artistes, led by the ministry's secretary-general, Datuk Zawawi Mahmuddin.

At the ceremony, a song "Doktor Ku" (My Doctor) was sung for Dr Mahathir who celebrated his 72nd birthday. The song was composed by RTM director of music Datuk Ahmad Dassilah with lyrics by Information Minister Datuk Mohamed Rahmat.

Also present were Deputy Information Minister Datuk Suleiman Mohamed and the ministry's parliamentary secretary, Datuk Shafie Apdal. -- BERNAMA

AH NI RM MFJ