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Gerakan backs move to defend ringgit

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KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. - Parti Gerakan will support steps taken by the Government to fight speculative attacks on the ringgit.

Its president, Datuk Seri Dr Lim Keng Yaik, said today the party could not accept actions of certain individuals who indulged in speculation not only to make monetary gains, but to realise their hidden political agenda.

"We are prepared to accept movements in the value of the ringgit if it is genuinely the result of a realignment of market forces in the international money market that reflects economic fundamentals.

"Our economy is still very much open and vulnerable to sabotage by forces that disagree with our country's stand on international issues.

"As patriotic citizens, we must thus remain vigilant and united, always ready to defend the nation against attacks, be they on military, political, economical or cultural fronts," he said during the presidential address at the party's 26th annual delegates conference at its headquarters in Menara PGRM.

The conference was opened by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who is also the Barisan Nasional chairman.

Also present were the party's deputy president Datuk Kerk Choo Ting; Penang's former Chief Minister Tun Dr Lim Chong Eu and leaders of BN component parties.

Calling on the Government to consider exploring the possibility of joint economic actions on an Asean basis, Dr Lim said:

"One such action is the joint defence of the currencies of member countries should they be subjected to speculative attacks.

"We do hope the feasibility of this option can be looked into and an institutional mechanism for its implementation be found," he said, adding that the country should step up efforts "to build up our economic resilience."

Dr Lim, who is also the Primary Industries Minister, urged the Government to raise the salaries of workers in the public sector as a precaution against corruption.

"The salaries of the public sector employees, especially those in the lower rungs, must be increased to help them make ends meet."

He also called on the party leadership to minimise internal squabbles and to focus on the political agenda of achieving Vision 2020.

"Party members in various states should give one another support.

"As Penang is Gerakan's base and indeed bastion, all other states must give support and encouragement to party leaders in Penang so that they can continue their good work and face future challenges.

"On the other hand, leaders from Penang should also look beyond the island, and use Penang's experience to assist the party to grow and serve better in other states."

On the future roles of the party's Youth and Wanita wings, Dr Lim said:

"Our Youth wing must enter into serious dialogues with representatives of youth bodies in order to understand their needs to fight social ills.

"Likewise, our Wanita wing must enter into partnerships with non-governmental organisations that focus on women's issues for the effective formulation of more gender-specific programmes," he added.

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