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Anwar-Economy

MAHATHIR ISSUES DIRECTIVE TO STATE GOVERNMENTS

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 17 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has directed state governments to reduce programmes considered extravagant in efforts to assist the federal government strengthen the country's economy.

Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said that the directive was issued at a special meeting between Dr Mahathir and Menteri Besar and Chief Ministers here today.

He said that the meeting was held to discuss actions to be jointly taken by the federal and state governments to overcome economic problems faced by the country following the decline in the value of the Ringgit.

Anwar was speaking to reporters after receiving the director of the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO), Dr Jacques Diouf, at his office.

Anwar said that at the one-and-a-half hour meeting, they also touched on efforts to reduce imports and encourage exports and to maintain a smooth administration.

He said such efforts were necessary because the basic economic strength of the nation had to be protected.

"If we can protect our basic economic strength, then the effects of developments in the region or other nations will not threaten us," he said.

"I believe that with the directive issued by the government, and adopted by government departments and agencies, local authorities and the private sector, we will overcome the problem," he said.

The government recently directed that expenses of government departments and agencies be reduced by two per cent following the currency crisis.

Meanwhile, he said that the government had agreed to give its attention and provide cooperation in initiating economic activities in several African countries.

"Malaysia will cooperate with the FAO and the Islamic Development Bank to coordinate such activities and to provide effective assistance to several African countries really in need of our support," he said.

Anwar said that Malaysia, under its Technical Assistance Fund, had already conducted several programmes including a special project implemented by the Malaysian Agricultural Research and Development Authority (Mardi) in Malawi. -- BERNAMA

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