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Malaysians urged to be united and rally behind Dr M

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KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. - Gerakan president Datuk Seri Dr Lim Keng Yaik appealed to Malaysians to stay united and stand behind Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

"We should now tighten our belts and make ourselves more competitive in the international market rather than allow the foreign media to go on a Dr Mahathir-bashing exercise."

He said the Prime Minister had brought plenty of benefits to the country since he took office.

He was commenting on recent foreign media reports, including Newsweek, which suggested that Dr Mahathir should resign in view of the country's current economic situation.

Gerakan, said Dr Lim, considered Dr Mahathir as still dynamic and the party supported his leadership wholeheartedly.

The Prime Minister, he added, had directed the Cabinet to formulate steps to overcome the currency and stock market problems.

He said this was the time to "re-prioritise" the sectors - through the reduction of the balance of payments, of the outward push of wages and of import bills.

In Penang, Chief Minister Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon called on all Malaysians to close ranks and support the nation's leaders in stabilising the economy.

This, he said, would ensure the country maintained its competitive edge, while continuing the Malaysia Boleh concept.

Referring to recent negative foreign media reports on Dr Mahathir, Koh said the attacks were "unfair and unfounded".

"We must look at Dr Mahathir's track record for the past 16 years and see the vision he has given the country, by transforming it from an agriculture-based economy to a trade powerhouse," said the Gerakan vice-president who is also State Barisan Nasional chairman.

In likening the current economic situation to a "ship going through rough seas", Koh said: "There is no reason to change this ship's course or its captain and his team."

In Malacca, the State Umno declared full support for Dr Mahathir to continue leading the country and not succumb to pressure.

Malacca Umno Information chief Datuk Nasir Manap also called on all Malaysians to be united in supporting the Prime Minister and not be influenced by seditious claims made by the foreign Press.

"The Malacca Umno truly feels that the foreign media may be angry at Dr Mahathir for being outspoken. For this, Dr Mahathir had been made a victim by them.

"Therefore, we would like to voice our support for Dr Mahathir and are ready to stand behind him all the way," Nasir, who is also the State Legislative Assembly Speaker and Umno Kota Melaka division chief, said in a Press statement today.

Yesterday, MCA president Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik voiced his party's support for Dr Mahathir and said he was confident of the Prime Minister's handling of problems affecting the country.

Similar support for the Prime Minister was also voiced by the MIC and Umno Youth.

Nasir also voiced the State Umno's support for Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim in handling the nation's crisis.

"We also support Dr Mahathir's call that trade in foreign currencies be outlawed should it affect the stability of the country's currency," he said.

Meanwhile Umno Supreme Council member Datuk Mohd Ali Rustam criticised the foreign Press whom he accused of attempting to split the country by attacking the Prime Minister.

He said the foreign media would like to see the country's economy become unstable by creating unrest.

Mohd Ali said the articles by the foreign media were written with the motive of toppling the leadership.

Mohd Ali, who is also Malacca State Umno liaison committee deputy chairman, added the party was confident that Dr Mahathir would be able to solve the problems of the country including the depreciation of the ringgit.

"Dr Mahathir has proven that he is able to bring this country to progress in a short span of time.

"Therefore, the people especially Umno members and non-governmental organisations should make a stand that they truly support the leadership of the Prime Minister," he said.

Mohd Ali also urged the people to disregard negative foreign articles.

In Kuching, the Sarawak National Party, a BN component, today pledged its undivided support for Dr Mahathir and his leadership.

SNAP secretary-general Justin Jinggut said the party was strongly against attempts by the international media and certain foreign individuals to discredit Dr Mahathir and cause confusion in the country.

"We are all the way behind the Prime Minister and Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, in tackling the currency crisis and the economic situation experienced in the last few months," Bernama quoted him as saying.

He said SNAP was confident that Dr Mahathir would steer the country out of the current problem with Malaysia emerging as a stronger nation.

"SNAP believes that the current economic situation is just a hiccup which our leaders can resolve pretty soon," he added.

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