

10/01/1997

Ministers to help boost economy (HL)

Saiful Azhar Abdullah; Zubaidah Abu Bakar; Sharanjit Singh  
ALOR STAR, Thurs. - All Ministers have been given special tasks to boost the country's economic situation this year, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

He said some of the tasks were new programmes while some were continuation of existing programmes.

The Prime Minister also wants the State Governments to take the same steps.

At State-level, Dr Mahathir wants the Menteri Besar and Chief Ministers to outline specific duties for the Exco members in order to boost the State's economic growth.

He said the programmes would help increase the country's trade, reduce deficit and balance of payment and control inflation.

The Prime Minister was speaking to reporters after addressing a gathering attended by Barisan Nasional leaders and members at the Menteri Besar's official residence in Mentakong.

In his speech, Dr Mahathir said the new tasks were given to the Ministers at yesterday's Cabinet meeting.

"We have listed out the duties which should be carried out by the Ministers to improve the Malaysian economy.

"I have told the Ministers not to publicise what we are planning to do but I have listed out several (programmes) which we believe will improve the Malaysian economy.

"It will increase our trade and export, reduce deficit and balance of payment and control inflation.

"We also believe that we will achieve greater success in 1997 or at least it will be at par with last year's achievement... there is no need to elaborate," he told reporters later.

Asked why there was a need for new measures and whether the existing measures were insufficient, Dr Mahathir said it was to speed up the country's economic growth.

"We have a slight problem with our balance of payments. We want to see Malaysians enjoying a higher per capita income and purchasing power through the control of inflation.

"We also want to see Malaysians becoming more prosperous," he added.

Dr Mahathir said he would discuss with the Menteri Besar and Chief Ministers on the tasks at the Umno supreme council meeting on Saturday.

The Malaysian Business Council meeting in January last year had discussed strategies to resolve the country's deficit payments through increased exports and ways to enhance industrial development. The meeting, which was chaired by Dr Mahathir, was attended by Ministers and Menteri Besar apart from Government officials and corporate figures.

On the appointment of members of the international advisory panel for the Multimedia Super Corridor, the Prime Minister said the Government had invited many chief executives from well known international companies like Microsoft, Microsystem and Acer to be members of the panel.

He said he would be meeting 22 of the 26 chief executives during his visit to the US next week.

"The list of members of the panel will be announced after the meeting," he added.

On the penalty for those who failed to renew their identity cards after the Dec 31 deadline, Dr Mahathir said the Cabinet had decided on the

matter and an announcement would be made soon.

On the National Union of Teaching Profession's objection to the single-session school, Dr Mahathir said the Government had always emphasised students' education.

"However some quarters feel by doing this we are ignoring their interests.

"We have to decide whether we want to set our priority for the students or the union.

"On the other hand, we have found that many teachers agree with the idea, only NUTP is objecting."

(END)