

28/11/1997

Musa: Refrain from accepting any form of aid

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MALAYSIA, in its efforts to restore strength and confidence to its economy, should refrain from accepting any form of aid from the international community, says Tan Sri Musa Hitam, a former deputy prime minister.

Musa, who is the Special Envoy of the Prime Minister to Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group, said acceptance of "bits and pieces" of such aid is bad as far as boosting the confidence of people and the business community.

"What is not needed is the nibbling of offering in bits and pieces. Not only is that bad in terms of confidence to the people and the business community, it is also confusing," he added.

Musa, who is also the Malaysian delegate to the UN Commission on Human Rights, spoke to reporters in Kuala Lumpur after presenting a keynote address at the Association of South-East Asian Nations Congress on Media Laws and Policies.

"I hope the formation of the National Economic Action Council (NEAC) will allow the Government to really look at the present problem comprehensively, identifying it and work out solutions to solve it," he added.

Musa also said there is a strong "denial factor" occurring among South-East Asian nations. He termed the denial factor as "continuously denying that something is wrong with us and we are the ones that are causing it."

He hopes that this factor is reduced in Malaysia as this will allow the country to put things into perspective and work out a comprehensive solution to the present crisis in the region.

"The formation of the NEAC is a sign to show that the Government is indeed trying to reduce this denial factor," he added.

Musa said with this factor out of the way, the council could take a hard look at the present economic problems, and offer a comprehensive package to the Government and introduce it to the system in overcoming the crisis.

"I think this will go a long way. Statements even by very influential figures now do not help. The business community and most of the Malaysian population are hard-nosed people, dealing with money everyday.

"Whatever you say, they know the situation. They are very cautious, and have been bitten too many times. Every time they buy (stocks in the market) they lose, and the ringgit continues with its trend.

"They know this, and they just do not want to come in unless they are very sure. So, this comprehensive package by the NEAC is urgent for us to overcome the problem," he added.

Musa said he is aware that Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had said the NEAC would have an advisory role in tackling the country's economic problems.

"But I hope the role will be more of advisory role to the Government rather than to anybody else," he added,

Musa also expressed hope that personalities to sit on the NEAC will be those who are able to offer objective and constructive formulae in trying to overcome the existing problem.

He noted that Malaysia has a lot of talents who have nothing to lose or to gain if they sit on the NEAC as council members and draw up the appropriate advice to the Government.

He said the thrust behind the NEAC should be in accordance with the

Malaysian and Asian values, that is the interest of the community against the interest of individuals.

"In other words, if the individuals and the really bad who need to be sacrificed in working out the solutions, let it be. It is for the community's interests, and for the good of the country on the whole.

"Let the really bad go down the drain. This is serious and in accordance with our perceptions and cultural heritage. It is time to apply it here. It is also common sense and in accordance with economic principles," he added.

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