

10/10/1997

PM: Help from all vital for strategy to succeed

THE Government has a strategy that can help overcome the problems brought about by the weakening ringgit, but it must be implemented with the full cooperation of all Malaysians.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the strategy does not require any sacrifices from the people but they have to be disciplined in observing measures proposed by the Government.

Dr Mahathir declined to elaborate, except to give an assurance that it will "not be detrimental to any quarter."

He was speaking at a news conference after delivering a keynote address at a seminar on "Strategic Thinking-Lessons From Three Great Asian Civilisations For Today's Modern Management" in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

However, when asked to elaborate after chairing the Umno Supreme Council meeting last night, Dr Mahathir said since the ringgit is still fluctuating, the situation does not yet warrant for the strategy to be implemented now.

"The situation is not that pressing (yet)," he said.

At the earlier press conference, Dr Mahathir said, "We are thinking of strategies to overcome this problem. We have seen the ways (to overcome it) but it requires the cooperation of everyone in the country, whether they are workers or managers or traders ... everybody.

"If we are prepared to accept the approach, which is currently under study by the Government, I am confident that we will be able to overcome the problem. But I cannot reveal (the details)."

He explained that no one will lose through the strategy the Government is planning but it will have to be strictly observed. "If we do, we have nothing to lose," he added.

Asked when the strategy will be implemented, the Prime Minister said the Government will not be hasty because "if the currency falls to any level, we can overcome it."

Asked whether the strategy will affect next year's Budget, he said: "No effect. In fact, our Budget will be stronger."

Dr Mahathir said the important thing is that people should give a chance for the strategy to be implemented before making conclusion.

"You ought to know that in Malaysia, there are bound to be objections to whatever suggestions we make. There will always be people who complain ... nothing seems to be right.

"If we go right, they say we should go left. If we say right, they say we should go left ... that is Malaysia," he said.

He, however, expressed confidence that the approach being formulated by the Government will be accepted by the majority of the people in the country.

Earlier, in his keynote address, Dr Mahathir said if Malaysians retain their composure and are disciplined, the implementation of even a strategically weak plan will succeed, if not fully at least partly.

"And as we go along, we will make the necessary adjustments and we will recover.

"We are indulging in strategic thinking at the moment. We may come up with a solution soon. Give the solution a chance and, by the Grace of God, we will overcome."

And in the running of a country, strategies are required "unless you want to administer and not develop. To develop, that is, to improve over

the present state, we must have a strategy and a strategic plan."

Dr Mahathir said, however, that some strategies do not work even if they are the correct ones.

The implementation of even the most carefully thought out strategies require careful judgement. A great deal of pragmatism and flexibility is needed.

Giving his own definition of strategy as "a set of approaches towards achieving an objective", Dr Mahathir said in the case of Malaysia, the objective is to develop the country and achieve developed country status by the year 2020.

One, he said, can develop a country in many ways. "One can just tag along, attending to problems as they present themselves. But people might get impatient and throw you out of office. This strategy might not work."

Dr Mahathir, describing himself as a "doer than a thinker", said many people say he often shoot from the hips. "Perhaps they are right. Certainly they take careful aim at me when they say that.

"But if you hold public office, you must accept being shot at. I am glad that the shooting is hypothetical rather than literal. Other leaders are not do lucky," he added.

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