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Repay your debt to society, Dr Mahathir reminds businessmen

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LANGKAWI, Thurs. - Malaysian businessmen should be disciplined, keep costs low and avoid profiteering to tide over the present currency problem faced by the country, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

He reminded businessmen that they had a debt to society, if not the Government, in facing the problem.

"They have a debt to the society because society makes it possible for them to make the kind of money they have been making," he said at the blessing ceremony of the ro-ro catamaran MV Superstar Express which is owned by Star Cruises at Tanjung Malai.

"Some people think this is the opportunity to make money for themselves. What happens to the country does not matter to them," he said.

Dr Mahathir said they must not forget that all citizens had contributed to the kind of society that Malaysians have, leading to the success of business brought about by the healthy political and investment climate.

Dr Mahathir said if there were upheavals like public demonstrations or a Government unsympathetic towards business, they could not be what they are today.

It was therefore timely for them to repay their debt to the people in times of difficulties like during the present currency depreciation.

The Prime Minister, in reference to the success of the Star Cruise liners, said in order to make good profit, a businessman must invest a lot of capital.

He said it was a misconception that one could make lots of money with little investment.

On the RM150 million ro-ro catamaran with a speed of 42 knots, which started plying between Langkawi and Penang last week, he said it would provide an alternative means of transport for those wanting to visit the island resort.

He said travelling cost would be cut as visitors could bring their own cars if they wished.

The high-speed catamaran can ferry passengers and 175 vehicles and it will later extend its service to Phuket.

Dr Mahathir complimented the operators for their gesture in reducing the fares by 50 per cent during the school holidays.

Later, Dr Mahathir officiated the launch of an attempt by the catamaran to break the world record for the fastest round-the-world trip by sea.

The journey will start from Port Klang in June, calling at 10 ports within 48 days. The record is held by the United States submarine USS Triton which made it in 83 days.

A trophy called the Prime Ministers' Trophy (named after the past, present and future Prime Ministers) is being awarded for this race and for others who may want to break the record.

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