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Mahathir-Economy

SET ASIDE SHORT-TERM INTEREST TO REVITALISE THE NATIONAL ECONOMY

KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 18 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad tonight advised traders and businessmen to be disciplined and to set aside short-term interest to overcome the country's economic woes.

The prime minister said it was difficult for the economy to recover if they continued "bad practices" like chasing instant profit.

"What is most important is loyalty to the country and confidence in its currency. If the traders and entrepreneurs practise self-interest and lack confidence in the ringgit and take actions that reflect this lack of confidence, the ringgit's value will continue to fall.

"So also with the shares, those who sell the shares for profit when the share prices rise a bit will cause the market to weaken and drop further," he said at a dinner organised by the Malaysian National Chamber of Commerce and Industry, here.

Dr Mahathir said the government was sad to see profit taking when the share prices rose after it announced certain actions which entailed sacrifices from government servants.

"The traders should also sacrifice. But they have sold the shares whose prices had gone up for profit taking," he said, referring to the pay cuts and freeze on annual increments for civil servants as examples of the sacrifices he meant.

"As long as the traders and entrepreneurs continue this bad practice, we will not be able to improve the situation. Besides that, it is very important for us not to be wasteful by paying ourselves and other executives exorbitant wages. Salaries, wages and other remuneration in the private sector must be reduced, just in the government," he said.

Dr Mahathir also said that although the proposed National Economic Action Council (NEAC) had many ways of improving the national economy "everything depends on the loyalty and discipline of the people."

The NEAC, proposed to be set up this month, will be chaired by Dr Mahathir. Its role is to advise the government on economic matters.

Dr Mahathir hoped that the chamber would play a serious and effective role in revitalising the national economy. -- BERNAMA

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