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Mahathir-imports

SHOW UNITY BY CUTTING IMPORTS, SAYS MAHATHIR

PULAU PINANG, Nov 17 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today said the people should prove that they stand united in facing external pressures now by cutting down on imports.

Just as the country was feeling the brunt of a weakened currency, the people could make exporting countries also feel the pinch of a depreciating ringgit by reducing imports, he said.

Addressing more than 3,000 people who welcomed him at the Bayan Lepas International Airport here, Dr Mahathir said the depreciating ringgit was caused by greedy people out to rob the poor.

The prime minister arrived here to open the 30th international convention of Chinese-language newspapers at a Teluk Bahang hotel.

He said while the country was practising open and free economy to enable Malaysians to have purchasing power, certain parties deliberately undermined the system.

In the wake of this, he said, it was only fitting that the people buy locally-made goods so that certain exporting countries would also be impoverished as Malaysians ignored their products.

Dr Mahathir said the people's support for his leadership was in fact proof of their conviction that it was they who determined Malaysia's destiny and not other countries or the foreign media.

"The posters and banners displayed at this gathering expressing support for me are actually backing national policies, " he said.

Also at the airport to welcome him were leaders of the state Barisan Nasional component parties, led by Chief Minister Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon, and his deputy Datuk Mohd Shariff Haji Omar.

Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi accompanied the prime minister.-- BERNAMA

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