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Back Dr Mahathir and his policies

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I REFER to "Other Thots" on rumour-mongering (New Sunday Times, Aug 16), and to the recent calls by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad for strong measures to revitalise the nation's economy.

I think most Malaysians have recognised that we are facing an economic attack. This is the stark reality. No amount of tendentious articles, and smudged thinking in the "international" media can disguise this fact. Fortunately, our Prime Minister recognised this reality from the start, and saved us from an IMF Trojan horse.

The threat is not over. In fact, it has just begun. Our share prices, the key to our nation's corporate wealth, have been pushed below their real worth. They are now vulnerable to foreign take-over and asset stripping. This is how precarious the situation can be.

We are informed that the Government is planning to introduce a series of measures to protect our nation's corporate wealth, improve our foreign exchange situation and restore the nation's economic vitality and growth rate.

Through sound economic planning and hard work, the Government has brought us from a primary, agrarian economy to the edge of being a modern, developed economy. Thus, it is logical to believe that they can do it again. And to help the Government achieve this is to help ourselves.

We can do this by supporting the various economic measures, and seriously heeding the guidelines and advice on a day-to-day basis. We should also refrain from trying to appear "clever" and critical of everything.

We should not, at this time, be negative or cynical. We should recognise that, when a policy is announced, careful thought would have gone into its formulation, based on extensive information, some of which are not available to us. Most certainly not to coffeeshop pundits. At a time of economic struggle, or any struggle, it would be patently unwise for the Government to show all its cards.

Government agencies, too, must adjust to the current situation. At the senior level, officers who are in regular contact with the Ministers appear to understand the new direction, for example the need to increase foreign exchange earnings, and encourage import substitution. But, this sense of urgency must percolate down to the junior level where nuts and bolts decisions are made.

Our media, too, should come in from the sidelines. Too often do we read of stories that reflect more the shadows than the light. The media should look at our achievements such as the artistic, cultural and sporting accomplishments, as well as research and technological breakthroughs at our universities. I do not mean we should boast about it, but good journalists know how to write tastefully and informatively.

As Other Thots correctly pointed out, we should refrain from spreading rumours. Most rumours are negative and harmful. When I was in Jakarta recently, there were Press reports on rumours that ethnic violence was imminent in the Chow Kit area of Kuala Lumpur. We had to assure parents and academics that such rumours and reports were totally without foundation, and should be ignored.

Our nation is lucky in that at each time of crisis, we have the right leader at the helm. At this critical time in our nation's life, we have Dr Mahathir. We should show the world that we back him, and fully support his

policies.