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PM: Be prepared for 'shocking' measures (HL)

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KOTA KINABALU, Sat. - Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today told the people to be prepared to accept further measures, which he said might be "shocking", to overcome the economic problems.

The Prime Minister, however, assured them that whatever the measures, they were strictly aimed at expediting the recovery process.

"To do this, we need the people's unwavering support and confidence," he told a huge crowd at the Likas Sports Complex.

Dr Mahathir's one-and-a-half-hour speech, much of which centred on the efforts to revive the economy and the need for the people to support the Government, was interrupted by much applause.

"We may be taking a number of measures which may shock us. We may feel frightened or doubtful as to whether they will benefit us and whether they will help overcome our economic problems.

"But believe me, every time we act, we think about it deeply and ensure the approach is only for the people's benefit."

At present, he said, the Government was taking measures through the National Economic Action Council which was given the power "to defend our freedom" through recovery of the economy.

In all these measures, he said, the people's support and confidence were necessary. If there were riots, strikes or racial disharmony, it would be difficult to implement them successfully, he said.

Later, when asked to elaborate on the measures which might be "shocking" at a Press conference at Kota Kinabalu International Airport, Dr Mahathir said the Government might decide to take measures which the people did not expect.

"We may have to ... we may not, but I mentioned this to prepare the people."

In his speech, Dr Mahathir reminded the people that the Government could not effectively implement projects, no matter how good they were, unless they had strong public backing.

He assured Malaysians that they could continue to count on the Government under which they had enjoyed many benefits in the 41 years since independence.

"The Government has developed the country rapidly and uplifted living standards. And believe me, with the people's support now, the same Government will continue to do so."

He said the people need not doubt the Government's actions as they were carried out for their benefit.

"Our intention is always to ensure the people live in peace and prosperity," said Dr Mahathir, who is on a nationwide tour to explain the economic problems and measures to overcome them.

He said as Sabah would hold its elections soon, it was important that the people and the leaders understand the economic situation.

Dr Mahathir noted that while some developing countries faced hardships and lost their leaders following the attacks on their currencies, Malaysia, with the people's support, was withstanding the pressure on its currency and shares.

"Changing its leader does not help a country defend itself from attacks on its currency. It may make it worse," Dr Mahathir said, adding that several developing countries had changed their leaders and there had been suggestions (by the foreign media) that Malaysia should follow suit.

But such suggestions, he said, had made no impact as the people had made it clear they did not want outsiders to interfere in the country's political affairs.

"It is the people's support that places the Government on a strong footing and allows it to continue to defend the country's interests."

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