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Extraordinary measures needed to get back on track

Badrul Hisham Mahzan

KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. - Extraordinary measures are needed to resolve the current economic problems as the conventional approach is not likely to be effective, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said.

He said the government was now looking into this.

Speaking at the Malaysian Malay Chamber of Commerce's annual dinner at a hotel here, Dr Mahathir said:

"Any extraordinary measures taken by the government must be fully supported by the people if they are to be successfully implemented."

Saying he was not hinting at any new measures in particular, the Prime Minister said the government had, in the past, introduced extraordinary measures, including the manufacturing of Malaysian-made cars, the Malaysia Incorporated policy and the National Economic Policy.

He said there were people who criticised these ideas, but eventually the government was able to prove them wrong when these programmes turned out successfully.

Dr Mahathir told the gathering that the economic problems could be resolved if the people, especially Bumiputera entrepreneurs, continue to support the government.

He warned that even the best plans formulated by the government could not resolve the problems if the people were disunited.

"I am glad that there is no disunity in the country and the people are strongly behind the government."

Dr Mahathir said that foreigners had often asked him why there was no rioting in the country despite the economic downturn.

He said entrepreneurs in the country were fortunate as they did not have to endure hardship like those in neighbouring countries where former businessmen had to resort to selling sandwiches by the roadside.

However, he reminded the businessmen not to regard the problems as small as even the government was finding it difficult to resolve them.

"Though we are not badly affected, the situation itself has not shown any recovery. The problem is still continuing and if we leave it unchecked, we will become like some of the neighbouring countries."

Earlier, the chamber president Tan Sri Tajudin Ramli in his welcoming address said members of the chamber pledged their full support to the Prime Minister in whatever action Dr Mahathir took to resolve the economic problems.

He also said the chamber, at its last general meeting held in May, agreed to expand its role from just assisting Bumiputera businessmen to working closely with the government in helping the Malays.

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