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Mahathir-donations

GOVT WELCOMES PEOPLE'S CONTRIBUTIONS BUT WON'T IMPOSE, SAYS PM

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 9 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today said the government would not impose upon Malaysians to make voluntary contributions in cash and kind to help it alleviate current economic problems.

But, the prime minister hinted such patriotic gesture was laudible and that the government would welcome contributions.

"It's unfair that only government servants bear the burden (through pay and allowance cuts). Other members of the public should also contribute within their means. But I must make it clear that the government will not force anyone," Dr Mahathir said.

He was reacting to a viewer's suggestion over TV3's live morning talk show "Malaysia Hari Ini" on which the Prime Minister discussed consumers and the economy in a special interview.

The viewer had e-mailed a proposal that each public and private sector worker be made to take a RM10-pay cut as a show of support for the country in times of economic difficulties.

"I think this is a good approach. We don't want to impose upon anyone but if we think it is an obligation to our country, towards national economic recovery, then this is a good way," he said.

Public contributions would allow the country to have a very large fund to help in revitalising the economy, he said.

He said what the viewer had proposed was what the South Koreans had already done recently by donating about 10 tonnes of jewellery to help their government weather that country's economic turbulence.

The South Koreans had also donated foreign currencies in their savings to their country's aid, he said.

"This is a sound proposal, the government does not want to impose on anyone but as everyone knows, we have cut civil servants' salaries including that of senior government officers by three per cent...that itself is more than RM 10," he said.

The government has cut by about 10 per cent the entertainment and civil service allowances of about 80,000 officers and senior officers as part of its cut-backs in spending.

Asked how housewives and mothers could help the country now, Dr Mahathir reminded them to control household expenditure.

Dr Mahathir advised housewives to exercise thrift in daily household spending and choose local products for their daily needs.

As for parents, he urged them to inculcate in their children the saving habit and prudence in money management.

According to him, Bumiputera parents were now good in managing their money and have become wealthy but not their children.

"Their children live very lavishly and are bad in managing money. When they grow up they won't be as good as their parents in handling money," he said.

During the 90-minute programme, the prime minister also advised parents with children studying overseas to think carefully when deciding whether they should continue studying abroad.

He said with the ringgit's depreciation against foreign currencies like the US dollar and the pound, parents contemplating recalling their children home should ensure that they have the place to continue their studies locally.

In cases where a family has two children studying abroad, one in the final year and the other just starting a course, perhaps the latter should be recalled home, he added. -- BERNAMA

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