

11 JUL 1998

Mahathir-Faith

HAVE FAITH IN GOVERNMENT, SAYS MAHATHIR

MELAKA, July 11 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today urged the people to have confidence in the government in whatever action it takes to tide over the economic slowdown.

" The government has no other motives besides defending the rights of the people. That's only the government's motive. Whatever action we take, it is for the people," he said.

He said Malaysia could face the challenges at hand calmly and protect its sovereignty.

" The government will try its level best but it needs the people's support. The people's unity is crucial in our efforts to defend our country's sovereignty," he said when addressing an all-community gathering at Ayer Keroh here today.

Dr Mahathir said he was grateful to be the leader of a country whose people were matured as they did not resort to riots or strikes as in other countries.

He also thanked the trade unions for not creating problems as the people's purchasing power had dwindled due to soaring prices of goods and services as compared to their salaries.

Dr Mahathir, however, said the people did not very much feel the pinch of the economic slowdown but companies faced big problems and many might go bankrupt.

"Banks are under tremendous pressure. If this continues, the people will suffer. Like the Indonesians, we will also suffer but if we know how to protect our country, we are save," he said.

He also urged the people to be wary against allegations that the government practised nepotism and cronyism by awarding projects and contracts to friends and relatives of government leaders.

" The allegations are not true at all. That's why we release the list of project recipients," he said.

" We must be careful against such people as they have forked tongue," he said.

Dr Mahathir also said many people advised him not to talk on the currency crisis but "if I did not explain to the people, they will not know the actual situation."

"Many of us also want to believe there is irregularities in the country's administration. If we believe so and spread the news, confidence in the government will be eroded and the country will have a weak government," he said.

He said a weak government would not be able to defend the country's sovereignty from foreigners' attacks.

" What they did to us is very cruel indeed. We slogged for 20 years to develop our country but all our hardwork was wiped out in a month," he said.

Dr Mahathir, however, said Malaysia had not been compelled to seek assistance from the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

" This is testimony to the Malaysian government's strength," he added.

-- BERNAMA

MKO/NO TS