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Mahathir - influence

M'SIA TO LIMIT NEGATIVE FOREIGN INFLUENCES ON ECONOMY, SAYS MAHATHIR

KUALA LUMPUR, April 29 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said Malaysia will strive to limit adverse foreign influences on the national economy.

He said by this he meant negative foreign influences with manipulative control over the currency and "those who dictate whether to impoverish or enrich the country".

However, he said, the government's efforts towards this end would not run counter to its policy of wooing investors to the country.

Dr Mahathir, who is also Umno president, was speaking at a press conference after a closed-door meeting with party divisional chiefs and leaders of the Umno Youth and Wanita movements here.

His deputy Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, who also attended the meeting, was present at the press conference.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia was not keen on foreign investors coming in for the short-term.

When asked whether the government's efforts to minimise negative foreign influences on the economy would contradict what it was doing to woo foreign investors Dr Mahathir said: "There's no conflict. Even from before there's no conflict."

This was because, he said, investors in the manufacturing and production sectors made their own decisions not out of political pressure except that they only would need political stability.

"Other than that, they are not involved as far as politics is concerned," he said.

On his meeting today with the Umno leaders, Dr Mahathir said they wanted to know when would the current economic woes end and who were behind the depreciation of the ringgit.

The prime minister said so far the government had not been able to forecast an end to the problems.

"So many things are beyond the government's control. Nonetheless, we'll try," he said.

Dr Mahathir said today's meeting was supposed to be held much earlier but was deferred because of several reasons.

"It's normal for Umno to hold such a meeting. We'll meet every time there's a problem so that rapport between the central and divisional leaderships is always maintained," he said.

Asked whether leadership at the division-level had been asked to implement follow-up measures to deal with the current economic problems, Dr Mahathir said there was no such directive.

Dr Mahathir said he merely gave them explanation so that they were familiar with the situation.

Meanwhile, Anwar said those who attended the meeting had not only understood well Dr Mahathir's explanation but also pledged solid support for the prime minister in dealing with the problems.

"Their pledge of support was spontaneous and not pre-arranged," Anwar added.

-- BERNAMA

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