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Malaysians must fully support tough measures

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I CONGRATULATE Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and his advisers for bucking the long-held, and almost sacrosanct, economic and financial orthodoxy of the free market. Our foreign detractors, in particular, cannot now say that we have done nothing about confronting our economic problems.

We still will not get too many Brownie points judging from the comments of foreign stock and financial analysts who are contributing, on a daily basis, their tuppence's worth to the debate on the rights and wrongs of our measures, on CNN and CNBC.

At the risk of being accused of chauvinism, I find it highly instructive to pay close attention to the line of questioning of the "anchors", particularly the female species of the breed. Their questions are incapable of producing responses except of the most negative and uncharitable kind. So much for their much touted even-handed news treatment.

Malaysians who have lived through the pre- and post-Merdeka periods will, no doubt, recall that very few foreigners gave us a fighting chance of survival without their "wise, just and benign" protection. We have not only survived; we have become a much more united people.

We have charted our own destiny and, in retrospect, without being immodest, we have done rather well. And all we ask now of well-meaning foreigners is that they should take their gratuitous advice elsewhere. If we had listened to their advice on economic planning, we would still be hewers of wood and carriers of water today.

Now that the die is cast, Malaysians must support these survival measures to the hilt. In return the Government must not fritter away the temporary gains resulting from the new policy. The breather we have gained should enable us to put in place at once much needed reforms without which we will have lost a great opportunity for sustainable recovery.

Our overall aim should not be more of the same situation prior to the meltdown, however good it might have been to a select few. The only credible object of this series of "shocking" measures, as the Prime Minister puts it, must be the development of a national integrity system which encompasses good governance, including better than good corporate governance.

Nothing less will suffice for Malaysia after the experience of the recent past. There is, at the end of the day, a mutuality of common responsibilities and values.