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MENTRIS BESAR AND CHIEF MINISTERS MADE STATE NEAC CHAIRMEN

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 9 (Bernama) -- All Menteri Besar and Chief Ministers were today appointed as state chairmen of the National Economic Action Council (NEAC).

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the NEAC at the state level would respond immediately to developments at the grassroots level following the country's economic slowdown.

Mahathir who is also Umno president was speaking to reporters after chairing the first Umno Supreme Council meeting for the year here today.

The state-level NEAC is also responsible in explaining to the people what is really happening to the country's economy and asking them to be realistic.

"We must accept the fact that we can no longer lead a luxury life as we used to. We must use and buy locally made goods," he said.

This, he said, would help the country to overcome the problem.

NEAC is entrusted fully with the responsibility of taking immediate actions to address the economic slowdown following the depreciation of the Ringgit and share market.

At the national level, NEAC is headed by Dr Mahathir with Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim as council's deputy chairman. The government economic adviser Tun Daim Zainuddin is NEAC executive director.

Dr Mahathir said that since was a national problem, there was no reason not to include Kelantan Menteri Besar Datuk Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat as state chairman for the Kelantan NEAC.

"We don't care what party. This is a national problem. I am confident that they will discharge their duties like the others too," he said when asked about the opposition-led Kelantan.

"Surely you don't expect us to appoint Annuar Musa," he said of the state chairman's post for the NEAC. Annuar is Rural Development Minister and also Kelantan Umno deputy liaison chief.

Dr Mahathir said today's meeting discussed at length the country's economic situation as well as strategies needed to address the problem.

Asked about the people's support to government's call to spend wisely, he said the response was encouraging.

"Several people came to me at the supermarket and said they supported the action taken by the government. They were sincere and I didn't know them before," he said. --BERNAMA

TEAM ABG