

01/06/1998

PM: Face economic problems in rational and sensitive manner

Alex Choong; Marina Tan

KUALA LUMPUR, Sun. - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad reiterated his call to Malaysians to remain united and face the country's economic problems in a rational and sensitive manner.

Dr Mahathir said these two qualities could help avoid possible misunderstanding and ill-feeling which were counter-productive to ongoing efforts to overcome the country's problems.

He said various steps had already been taken by the Government to restore the economy and one of them was the "Love Malaysia", "Buy Malaysia" campaign such as the one organised by the MCA.

Dr Mahathir said this at a large gathering of Malaysians at Dataran Merdeka tonight, including Bond girl Michelle Yeoh and other artistes.

Also present were the Prime Minister's wife Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali, MCA president Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik and his wife Datin Seri Ena Ling, deputy president Datuk Lim Ah Lek, MCA central committee members, the party's Wanita chief Datuk Teng Gaik Kwan and its Youth chief Datuk Chan Kong Choy.

Dr Mahathir said: "In some other multi-racial, multi-religious and multi-cultural countries, riots can be triggered by many factors. But we are fortunate because we are more rational and sensitive to each other's feelings and needs.

"This is one of our strengths. Of course, there are certain foreign Press which never fail to mention that there are racial undercurrents in the country.

"But tonight's gathering is a good example of how the various races in Malaysia get together to play their part in helping the economy. Some of the foreign reports seem to have been made by people who have closed their eyes, ears and minds.

"We can gather today without fear and tension. We must value this. I am very happy that tonight's event once again demonstrates the people's sensitive nature."

He cited as an example of Malaysians' sensitivity the gesture by the organisers to stop the performance for a while to observe the isyak prayers at about 8.30pm.

Dr Mahathir said the country was still committed to achieving developed nation status by 2020.

"We believe that we are able to develop the country to be on equal standing with other developed nations," he said.

He added others might want to see the country impoverished so that they could then acquire the nation's assets. Hence, the attack on share prices in the belief that they could then buy these companies cheap.

He said these people also wanted to take over local banks and industries. "If we allow this, then we will be their slaves and cannot claim to be independent," he said.

(END)