

23 OCT 1998

Budget-Thanks

PM THANKS NATIONAL SPECIAL FUND DONORS AND UNIONS

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 23 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, on behalf of the government, today thanked the people who have contributed to the National Special Fund, which to date has collected RM34.8 million, for their loyalty, the sense of responsibility and patriotism.

He said it would be wonderful if everyone emulated that attitude to help the government overcome all obstacles and restore the economy.

The fund was set up after the economic crisis to collect contributions from the public to boost the country's reserves.

"Although the nation has been impoverished, we still possess the strength to stand on our own, and to defend our position to continue the struggle towards revitalising economic growth," Dr Mahathir said when presenting the 1999 Budget at the Dewan Rakyat, here.

The prime minister also thanked the trade unions which had understood the crisis confronting the nation and were prepared to cooperate with the government to overcome all obstacles in efforts to restore the economy.

Unlike in other countries, workers in Malaysia and their organisations did not purposely make excessive demands at this time even though they faced hardships in their daily lives, he said.

Prime Minister said Malaysians who were really patriotic would not follow the actions of currency traders, short-term investors in stock market, rating agencies and the western media which had clearly indicated that they would like to destroy Malaysia's economy so that the country would have to follow their dictates.

Malaysians who collaborated with these people had certainly betrayed the nation, he said.

"Are they patriots when they go to other countries to tarnish the image of their own country, to obtain support from people who look down on the nation's legal process and independence?" he said.

He said it was very unfortunate that justice was being sought by way of mob-rule, demonstrations and protests.

"Is this the kind of reformation that needs to be introduced? Are we to replace the process of law and democracy with mob-law, with anarchy, by tarnishing the image of the country? Does this represent the type of reformation that we want in our much-loved Malaysia?," he said.

The prime minister said justice in the country was implemented through a disciplined and organised judicial process and the ruling party and its leaders were not exempted from being found guilty and being punished by the courts in Malaysia.

He said that as the judicial process in this country did not favour anyone but instead adhered strongly to principles, all parties should rightly seek settlements of disputes through trial in the courts.

-- BERNAMA

NY JK