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PM warns of attempts to use `people inside Umno'

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ALOR STAR, Thurs. - Explaining how current economic problems could undermine the nation's sovereignty, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today warned the people of attempts by certain quarters to use "people inside Umno" for their own interests.

Speaking before a crowd of 5,000 which included Umno and Barisan Nasional component party members at Wisma Darul Aman, the Prime Minister called on the people to defend the nation by upholding political stability.

Dr Mahathir, who is Umno president, expressed how he feared the country being "recolonised".

He explained how the West had used its economic power to devalue the currency and bring down the stock market and to make the people poor in its attempts to "recolonise" the country.

Unlike other countries which had succumbed to such pressure, Dr Mahathir said so far these attempts had failed because of the country's economic strength and the people's unity.

"Therefore, they realise that in order to weaken the Government, they will have to weaken Umno which is the thrust of the Barisan Nasional government," he added.

Citing the issue of nepotism and cronyism used by the foreigners to destabilise the country, Dr Mahathir said he was saddened that certain people in Umno had echoed the foreigners' view to gain political mileage.

"I am sad that they have allowed themselves to be the tool to weaken Umno whether they realise it or not ... if they really don't realise it, they are naive."

Describing the economic problem as the most serious the country had ever faced, Dr Mahathir related how his deputy, Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, Special Functions Minister Tun Daim Zainuddin and himself "cracked their brains" to save the country.

"That's why I don't have much time to go to the ground to explain the problems that we are facing now ... I fear the country will be re-colonised while under my leadership. That's why I feel that it is my duty and responsibility to defend our sovereignty.

"I would like to apologise to the people for not being able to explain this problem sooner because I am pressed for time to find solutions."

He said he was happy to see such a huge turnout which reflected their support for his leadership.

He chided a regional magazine which recently carried a report quoting a survey that only 16 per cent of Malaysians supported him and suggested that he stepped down.

Dr Mahathir called on the people not to be influenced by baseless stories to bring down the Government. "We must take good care of our country, protect our sovereignty and fight any attempt to recolonise us."

Earlier, he had a closed-door meeting with State Umno key members, also attended by Menteri Besar Tan Sri Sanusi Junid.

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