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PM: I am proud of people's resilience

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KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said while he was saddened by the 50 per cent depreciation in the value of the ringgit, he was proud of the people's resilience and unstinting support in tackling the economic problems.

Dr Mahathir said the problems had boosted everybody's self-confidence, courage, dedication and the will to confront head-on economic problems which he described as the "enemy"

"It is pointless to grumble without doing anything which could help oneself and the country in facing the problems," the Prime Minister and Barisan Nasional chairman said when addressing the 45th annual MCA general assembly here today.

There was a strong turnout of former MCA stalwarts at the AGM. They included life president Tan Sri Lee San Choon, Tun Omar Ong Yoke Lin, Tan Koon Swan, Datuk Dr Neo Yee Pan, Datuk Lee Kim Sai, and Tan Sri Chong Hon Nyan. This was commended by Dr Mahathir who saw this as evidence of solidarity in MCA. He said it was unfortunate that sometimes when politicians no longer held a post, they stayed away from party activities. "This happens to all parties, not excluding Umno. I am happy to see the interest taken by former MCA leaders."

Among the Barisan Nasional party leaders present were MIC president Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu, Gerakan president Datuk Seri Dr Lim Keng Yaik, Parti Pesaka Bumiputera Bersatu vice-president Datuk Amar Dr Sulaiman Daud, Liberal Democratic Party president Datuk Chong Kah Kiat and PPP president Datuk M. Kayveas.

Later, speaking to reporters, Dr Mahathir welcomed the proposal by former Umno deputy president Tun Ghafar Baba that the party allow the setting up of an Umno Veterans' Club to enable party veterans to contribute to national development.

Earlier, Dr Mahathir received a standing ovation when MCA president Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik pledged the party's support for him to remain as Prime Minister for "many, many more years to come".

Dr Mahathir said he took the support as one for the country and the people.

On the economic problems, Dr Mahathir said this was the time to show the capability of Malaysians to face the problem in a rational, systematic and practical manner.

"First and foremost, we strengthen our unity, then boost our productivity, increase savings and also the nation's competitiveness."

In this context, he was happy that the MCA had undertaken several programmes to ease the economic pressure, especially its efforts to raise money for various funds.

"Actually we have the wealth, but it is not used as the need does not arise. By this I mean savings and assets, especially jewellery, which do not give us returns."

He said this wealth should be mobilised as capital for the country, and utilised by businessmen which could help revive economic activities.

Dr Mahathir congratulated the MCA for its campaign to buy local products. "We supply the world with quality goods. Now we should buy our own quality goods to help our businesses to recover."

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