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Stability our strongest point, says MCA chief

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ATTEMPTS have been made by some Westerners and developed countries to take away Malaysia's strongest point, its socio-political stability, MCA president Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik said yesterday.

"Even our staunchest enemy acknowledges this. Malaysians must not let themselves fall prey to these people," he added.

From a non-political point of view, he said, Malaysia had been spared the labour unrest and riots that accompanied other economies that had fallen prey to currency speculators.

"We can proudly say that we have carried ourselves excellently up till now," he said at the one-day MCA economic seminar entitled Recovery of the Malaysian Economy - Opportunities and Prospects organised by the party's Economic Bureau.

Dr Ling, who is also the Transport Minister, said there were enough negative headlines and attempts from the West to "rob us of our strong points".

"As Malaysians, it is our responsibility not to be fooled into singing their song. We must remain a united nation to counter these negative comments."

He reiterated that the foreign media constantly harped on the negative issues and, if they did not have any, they conjured them up.

Foreign analysts and rating agencies like US-based Standard and Poor's, Moody's and Thomson Bank Watch, Dr Ling added, continued to downgrade the country's economy, manoeuvring these moves to jeopardise every move by the Government to revive the economy.

He said the foreigners had their reasons for constantly criticising the country and for damaging its reputation as an investment centre.

"But as Malaysians, we should not join them in bad-mouthing efforts taken by the Government to overcome the economic problem.

"If we want to see the nation's economy recover, let us all do our part."

Dr Ling also urged the people to give their undivided support to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and the economic measures taken by him to help revive the economy.

"When the financial crisis first surfaced in this region, Dr Mahathir was a very vocal critic of currency speculators for destroying decades of hard work put in by the Government to develop a country.

"He (Dr Mahathir) called on the world to regulate international currency trading, warning that an unregulated system could be detrimental to a country's economy.

"He did not get much support then.

"The developed countries laughed at his remarks, joined unfortunately by some Malaysians themselves.

"But today, the Prime Minister has been proven right," he said, adding that currency speculators had attacked the Hong Kong currency and stock market.

On steps taken by the party to help the country recover from the economic problems, Dr Ling said, the "Love Malaysia, Buy Malaysian Campaign" had been successful.

"This is reflected in the latest trade figures where the country recorded a trade surplus of RM6.047 billion in June compared to a RM2.799 billion deficit for the corresponding period last year," he added.

For the first half of this year, the country recorded a trade surplus of RM22.1 billion compared to a deficit of RM2.89 billion for the same period last year.

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