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Stick to business, foreign investors told

Hamisah Hamid

MALAYSIA welcomes foreign investors but will not allow them to use their economic power to exert political influence in this country, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said yesterday.

The Prime Minister said it is not the business of the foreign investors to determine the country's leadership and political direction.

"We do not want foreign investors to come to gain benefits only for themselves and play a role in determining who should be the leader and so on ... That is not their responsibility.

"They are welcome to make honest profits in the country and they should not try to use their economic power to exert political influence.

"The people in the country are capable of determining their own leaders. We are capable of managing our country politically," Dr Mahathir said when launching the Barisan Nasional (BN) Youth's carnival in Kuala Lumpur.

The one-day carnival, attended by leaders from the 14 BN component parties, was organised to raise money for the National Special Fund.

Dr Mahathir said some people who called themselves believers of the freedom of speech have made threats when the country voiced out its views on the economic problems.

"When we say it, they said foreign investors do not want to come. This is a kind of threat to our freedom of speech.

"This means that they are threatening us ... they actually don't believe in the freedom of speech," he said.

Malaysia, he said, has not closed its doors to foreign investors who are only here to make quick gains and as such, they should "not tell us that we have to set certain conditions if we want foreign investments".

He said Malaysia is peaceful and prosperous not because of foreign investors but due to the participation and contribution of the rakyat in the country's development.

This can be seen through the rakyat's response to the Government's call to free the country from the pressure from imports by producing local goods and not purchase foreign goods or travel overseas, he said.

He added it is the responsibility of all Malaysians to maintain the country's sovereignty and independence.

"We will manage our economy, God-willing, so that we can continue to be free and our independence will not be affected," he said.

Thanking those who have contributed to the National Special Fund, Dr Mahathir said the spirit to help the country is more important than the amount contributed.

The fund raised more than RM3 million yesterday, mainly from local corporations as well as BN component parties.

"I am confident that with the attitude of Malaysians today, we can maintain our independence and prosperity and will be able to revive the economy and thus achieve the developed status nation by the year 2020," he said.

The Prime Minister said the economic problems facing the country have not succeeded in undermining the solidarity of multi-racial Malaysians.

Unlike other countries such as Northern Ireland and the former Yugoslavia, the strong unity and the absence of envy among various races in Malaysia have prevented riots, he said.

"After the 1969 riot, the Government elected by the majority has created policies to distribute wealth equally among the population ... policies

also targeting to erase the causes of that riot.

Reminding everybody to be alert against parties out to undermine the unity in the wake of the economic crisis, he said: "We have achieved independence and we do not wish to be dominated again."

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