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Those who exploit economic woes warned

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KANGAR, Fri. - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today warned certain parties to stop exploiting the country's economic problems for their political gains.

He said it would be very unfortunate if they were to use the problems to win votes.

"Such actions can only be equated to abetting the enemies from outside the country," he said during the meet-the-people gathering at the Stadium Utama here.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysians who capitalise on the problems were no different from currency speculators who tried to profit from other countries' miseries.

Also present were Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamed Ali, Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Shahidan Kassim, and Padang Besar MP Datuk Azmi Khalid.

Dr Mahathir urged the people to continue to stand strongly behind the Government in its efforts to ward off any assault on the country's currency.

"One of the most effective ways for the people to help the Government is to maintain unity, besides being wise in their spending."

Dr Mahathir also drew the people's attention to the reports from Hong Kong which said it had declared war against currency speculators who were trying to force a devaluation of its currency by attacking the stock exchange.

Dr Mahathir reiterated that the free market system could be good provided there was some control over currency trading.

"Today Hong Kong has accepted (the fact) and declared a war (against currency speculators) until its economy revives. However, as long as there were speculators, they would always attack currencies, even after they were revived.

"And as long as they can attack our currency, we will not be safe," he added.

He said the International Monetary Fund had refused to control the currency traders' activities as it considered free market "its religion", which "they will protect even if it cost them their destruction".

Earlier, when opening the RM41.5 million Federal Building in Jalan Jubli Emas, Dr Mahathir paid tribute to the civil service stating that without its contributions the country would not attain the level of development it has enjoyed.

The Prime Minister said the civil service had managed to continuously improve on the one inherited from the British four decades ago.

"Our rapid growth cannot be attributed to the politicians alone but also to a system of administration with the capacity to translate government plans."

Dr Mahathir said in recognising the country's competent civil service, the developing world had been sending their officers to Malaysia for training and studying the administrative system.

The election of retired Chief Secretary to the Government, Tan Sri Ahmad Sarji, as the Commonwealth Association of Public Administration and Development (Capam) president last year was another testimony to Malaysia's competent civil service, Dr Mahathir added.

"We're grateful for having an efficient system and administrators to run the country without having to depend on anyone else.

"Without this, it's not possible for us to give meaning to our independence."

Dr Mahathir also said the Federal administration system practised in the country has benefited states with annual budget deficits like Perlis, which would, otherwise, not be able to develop themselves.

"Some of the more developed states have not been happy to see their resources distributed among other states.

"But everyone must bear in mind that the country was rich and big, and it included remote and poor areas. The rich states will indirectly benefit from improvements in these remote places," he added.

Dr Mahathir said the Federal Government would persist in developing these poorer states.

"Once developed, they will have the capacity to eventually pay off their debts.

"We will not write off their debts as this is not the way to please anyone," he said in a lighter vein.

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