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Mahathir-Message

WE HAVE TO BE RESPONSIBLE IN MANAGING OUR OWN COUNTRY, SAYS PM

KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 30 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said tonight that Malaysians must face the reality that they have to be responsible in defending and managing their own country.

He said that Malaysia should never depend on foreign assistance to overcome the current economic situation.

"We must strive on our own to revive our nation's economy and defend our sovereignty and independence," he said in his National Day address to the nation telecast live over RTM.

The theme of the 41st National Day celebration is "Our Nation, Our Responsibility".

Dr Mahathir said that the current economic problem had forced the government to revise the country's growth rate to a contraction of 1 per cent or more for this year compared with an 8 per cent growth for over 10 consecutive years previously.

The prime minister said that attempts to destroy Malaysia's economy through speculative attacks on the currency and the stock market and efforts to undermine the nation through so-called market forces, allegedly to discipline the government, almost succeeded in causing catastrophe.

"Outsiders never wish to see Malaysia recover by continuously attacking the country's currency and the stock market whenever the government initiate measures to revive the nation's economy.

"Thank God, so far we have managed to defend our country," he said.

Dr Mahathir said that Malaysia had resisted all such attempts because the country's development was based on its own efforts, finances and system and policies without having to bear the burden of paying huge foreign debts.

In this respect, he called on the people to continue maintaining racial harmony and political stability in the country to ensure economic recovery.

The prime minister said that the government would not hesitate to take action against anyone at all attempting to incite the people to cause racial riots in the country.

"Pressures by outsiders to do away with the ISA (Internal Security Act)...do they wish to see our national stability adversely affected by racial riots," he said.

The prime minister also said he was grateful that workers in the country had not resorted to industrial action that could further aggravate the current situation and hoped that employers appreciate this sense of responsibility displayed by the workers by protecting their welfare and interest.

"Wherever possible, employers should meet demands that are reasonable by the workers," he said.

Dr Mahathir also said that the people should understand the factors and pressures resulting from the economic downturn so that they could take appropriate actions to overcome them.

Dr Mahathir said that eventhough they had to reduce expenses, such reduction in expenses should not affect the businesses run by the locals like in domestic tourism which could help revive the nation's economy.

Banks also should abide by the government's policies and directives even if their short-term profits would be slightly reduced.

"The government's aim is nothing more than to revive the economy and to restore the dignity of the race and the nation," he said.

Dr Mahathir said that Malaysia could most likely revive its economy if the programme of the National Economic Action Council (NEAC), which has prepared a complete guideline to reactivate the various fields systematically, could be fully implemented.

The prime minister also called on the people to cooperate and give their full support to make the Kuala Lumpur 98, to be held in the country from Sept 11 to 21, a success.

"Eventhough we are facing an economic crisis, we are confident that we can manage the sports event well.

"The success of this Commonwealth Games will show the world that Malaysia has the capability to organise big international level events," he added.

-- BERNAMA

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