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Daim: Economic growth to continue

Jaswinder Kaur

ECONOMIC growth in the country has begun and is expected to continue, First Finance Minister Tun Daim Zainudin said yesterday.

He said there were signs that the economy would perform better next year.

"Even now figures on a monthly basis show the economy to be better compared to each previous month," he told reporters after presenting a working paper at the Barisan Nasional Youth Convention in Tuaran, Sabah.

He said this in response to a question on the connection between economic growth and the general election and if the economy will improve after the polls.

Daim said it was up to Barisan Nasional chairman Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad to announce when the general election will be held.

"Economic growth has started and is expected to continue.

"It is up to BN chairman (Dr Mahathir) to decide when to call for the general election. I am not interfering in this matter," said Daim, who is also Umno treasurer.

Daim said he believed that if the people were to work hard and enhance productivity, the nation could increase its exports.

"We also need to be united and must have a peaceful environment. This will encourage economic growth," he said.

Daim, who is Special Functions Minister, said the country had to be up to date with its policies.

"We cannot look behind. We must always look forward so that we will not get another shock," he said.

He was also asked to comment on how the BN Youth movement could assist in economic recovery.

"We have given them more details (during the convention). They already know the figures and now the figures have been confirmed," he said.

He said the figures included increase in car and motorcycle sales, companies showing profit, an increase in job opportunities and a decrease in retrenchment activities.

"Sales have also increased and people are buying things. More people are also smiling ... these are good signs," he said.

On allegations by certain quarters that some in the BN were materialistic instead of focusing on unity, Daim said such an allegation was untrue.

"There is nothing wrong with being materialistic. If one can afford to conduct business, then that is what he does. If he cannot, he does something else. Those who are involved in politics spend their time in politics. We cannot limit a person's abilities," he said.

Meanwhile, Daim was also asked about former Philippine President Fidel Ramos' claim that Malaysia was not active in relation to the East Asean Growth Area.

"He (Ramos) is dissatisfied. But it is the Philippines and Indonesia which do not have time to hold meetings, although Malaysia and Brunei have time.

"A senior officials meeting is scheduled for November but there is a possibility it will be postponed because they may not be able to attend," he said.

Daim said the Philippines was starting to show economic growth and is probably giving more priority towards the Asia Pacific Economic Co-

operation.

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