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'Ordinary people feeling impact of nation's recovery'

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KUALA LUMPUR, Sun. - The Prime Minister said he believes the men in the street have felt the impact of the economic recovery and alluded to the happy faces of shoppers comforted by the improved situation.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad also spoke of indicators like growing number of shoppers and sales of cars and motorcycles.

"They know they can spend because they have the means," he said.

Dr Mahathir was speaking to reporters after opening the Kelab Golf Perkhidmatan Awam and the civil service's family day, here.

He said company performance, too, has an impact. Because when a company makes a profit, their workers don't feel threatened.

"If the company is not doing well, the workers feel that they may be sacrificed," Dr Mahathir said.

He said a few businesses felt that the pace of recovery has been much faster than expected, citing the RM1 billion profit each registered by Maybank and Sime Darby.

Dr Mahathir also referred to Arab Malaysian Group's RM250-million profit in six months.

Asked to comment on an item in the Harakah, the Pas newspaper, about the intention of the opposition parties to remove the selective capital control measures if voted into power, the Prime Minister said that was done out of spite.

"If the control is lifted, I think the country will go down the drain," he said, adding that the opposition did not have ideas and was banking on a strategy of inciting hatred against the Government.

The opposition statement was signed by Pas president Datuk Fadzil Noor, DAP secretary-general Lim Kit Siang, Parti Rakyat Malaysia president Dr Syed Husin Ali and Parti Keadilan Nasional president Datin Seri Dr Wan Azizah Ismail.

Referring to Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, the Prime Minister said as Finance Minister, Anwar could carry out work involving ordinary administration of finance and development.

But Anwar could not deal with an economic crisis, he said.

And, Anwar was influenced by the International Monetary Fund's prescription of high interest rate, shorter non-performing loans' period and reducing government spending.

"The main thing is to get praise from abroad."

On the arsenic poisoning allegation, he said it was designed to agitate followers of Anwar to demonstrate again, and prolong his court case so that the issue could not be discussed in the coming general election.

He added that never in the country's history that a trial "goes on and on".

Dr Mahathir recalled the 1974 student demonstration (when Dr Mahathir was Education Minister) when some children purportedly died of starvation.

"(In the end) it was proven not one child died of starvation. The father of a child was very angry when his house had plenty of food," he said, adding that Anwar was involved then.

Returning to the current situation, he said: "They want their people to get very angry."

He recalled the claim by Dr Wan Azizah at the time of Anwar's arrest when she claimed the Government would inject her husband with HIV virus.

He added that the hospital (Hospital Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia) has

said that Anwar is well. "And that is a fact," he said.

On Anwar's reported non-co-operation with the team investigating the claim, he said he should submit to the tests required given the severity of his claim.

Earlier, Dr Mahathir said he recommends recreation to others, for, it improved blood circulation and, through club activities, government officials would improve rapport with each other and others.

During the British administration, the Malayan Civil Service officers had their exclusive clubs, driven by the belief that separation from their subordinates would reduce familiarity. This was said to be good for discipline and their work, he added.

Dr Mahathir said since Independence, this officers-subordinate barrier was gradually reduced without harming work.

He added that arrangements should be made to allow civil servants who were non-members of the club to bring their families to at least use the grounds.

"This is to enable the government employees to benefit ... of course, they can afford the membership fee of RM4,000," he said.

Chief Secretary to the Government Tan Sri Abdul Halim Ali, who is the club president, said it has about 2,000 members and the club was becoming popular with tourists through packages.

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