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PM: Critics have swallowed their words

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KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad tonight said foreign parties, including the International Monetary Fund, have now "swallowed their words" following the success of the country's selective capital controls.

To the resounding cheers of thousands of people, Dr Mahathir, who attended a meet-the-people session at the Kuala Lumpur Football Stadium in Cheras, said now that the country's economy had recovered, "the IMF and other foreign parties have acknowledged that we have recovered our way.

"We recovered without having to become beggars. And now they know the Barisan Nasional Government's rule is strong, with the support of more than two-thirds of the people, and good ... not just for our people but also for other countries.

"For this, I thank the people for their support without which the Government would not have dared to impose measures that big foreign countries were against."

Dr Mahathir added that with the full support of the people, "we will dare to oppose any country in the world and not bow to any foreign powers".

Now that the economy had recovered, he said, the Government would work towards ensuring that at the end of the year, the country's economic growth would be more than one per cent.

Dr Mahathir said this in an apparent reference to reports that the IMF, one of the country's sternest critics, had admitted that Malaysia's selective capital control measures had silenced much of the initial criticism by producing more positive results than many observers had expected.

The meet-the-people session tonight was organised by the Federal Territory BN. The stadium was flooded with a sea of humanity as the public turned up by the thousands to demonstrate their full support for the Government, and also to hear the Prime Minister speak.

Cheers, applause, and shouts of "Hidup Mahathir" and "Malaysia Boleh" burst forth when Dr Mahathir arrived.

Earlier, the crowd was entertained to performances from local artistes like Liza Hanim, a brass band and a lion dance troupe. Also present were Datuk Bandar Tan Sri Kamaruzzaman Shariff, Umno secretary-general Tan Sri Khalil Yaakob and acting Umno Youth chief Datuk Hishammuddin Tun Hussein.

Touching on Opposition parties, Dr Mahathir said they were not grateful and did not love the country.

"They enjoy the benefits of the country, live comfortably, and have the freedom to indulge in politics and yet they do not show love for the country."

Dr Mahathir also stressed the importance of adhering to the rule of law and all the country's laws. "For instance, when a case goes to trial, we should not discuss it as we will then not be respecting the country's laws and committing contempt of court.

"Newspapers and the television provide wide coverage of court cases.

"People can read about it and watch it on TV but they should not make comments on it, even if the comments were prejudicial to the Government or the people."

Dr Mahathir said he was confident that the people would continue to support the BN as it "protects the rights of all races in the country".

"While we help the Bumiputeras, we will never neglect the non-Bumiputeras."

He also reminded the people of the importance of political stability.

Referring to Opposition rule in Kelantan, Dr Mahathir said: "The people of Kelantan may all be pandai-pandai belaka (smart), but when they get a Government that cannot manage politics and the economy properly, they will become poor."

He said Kelantan leaders claimed to be religious experts but they could not inculcate Islamic principles among many people there, as apparent from the high number of dadah addicts.

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