

Sanctions will hurt people most, says Mahathir

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KUALA LUMPUR, Fri: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad urged Malaysians to draw lessons from the experiences of Iraq where the people are suffering from the grips of economic sanctions.

Therefore, he said efforts by Keadilan Youth Chief Ezam Mohd Noor to call on foreign countries to impose economic sanctions on Malaysia will only make the whole country suffer.

"If the world puts sanctions (on Malaysia), I will not be affected, but the people will," he told a press conference at the parliament lobby

after the Budget 2001 presentation.

"In the case of Iraq, the sanctions did not affect their leaders, but only its people," he said.

Bernama quoted a Singapore *Straits Times* report stating that Anwar's supporters had engaged a Washington-based firm to highlight his cause and lobby for economic pressure on Malaysia.

The prime minister said Ezam's act would only make the people suffer, eventually.

Asked if action will be taken against him, he said the government is studying whether his act is considered

"treasonable".

"Although he is doing this overseas, his focus is Malaysia, where he wants to tarnish the country's economy and make people suffer. He may think his act is to help his leader (Anwar Ibrahim), but it will be detrimental to the country," he said.

Mahathir said Ezam's campaigns would also deter foreign investors. He said Ezam's effort has already received tremendous support from the foreign media, and the situation would become worse when their governments are involved.

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