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`We must unite to face outside pressure to control our economy'

MALAYSIANS should unite and support the Government in the face of pressures from outside to control the economy and not quarrel over who was more Islamic, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said yesterday.

"These quarrels will only weaken us and Malaysia could be taken over by others. We see this happening in front of our eyes.

"But we think that this will not happen to us.

"It does not happen because the Government is strong. But if efforts are made to weaken the Government then a weak government will not be able to defend the independence of the country," he said.

Malaysia, he pointed out, had succeeded in administering the country and its finances well without depending on any country. If the Government had been spendthrift the country would have been in trouble, he said.

Even the big projects undertaken in Malaysia are designed to benefit the people and the country and are undertaken with domestic funds.

"In the management of the finances of the country you have to be very sharp in watching the trends, when to borrow and when to repay."

In fact, Malaysia is the only developing country which prepays its loans.

"But Malaysians are not proud of this," Dr Mahathir said.

If the Government had not administered its finances prudently and well, Malaysia today would have been in great debt.

But the Government has shown that it is capable of administering its finances well and there is no need to borrow.

Asked why some Malaysians did not appreciate this fact or did not seem to understand the situation, the Prime Minister said it was because they read foreign papers.

"Foreign papers have a different agenda and they don't like us. They are very angry with us and run all kinds of lies about us. Unfortunately Malaysians believe in those lies rather than believing in what they see in Malaysia," he said.

Asked whether he was hopeful of the outcome of the Group of Eight (G-8) meeting, Dr Mahathir replied: "Not hopeful at all."

He added that the the next course of action was to continue pushing to present views and concerns of developing countries to the developed world.

The G-8, will hold its summit in Okinawa from July 21 to 23.

Japanese Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori, who met the Asean leaders on Friday, has agreed to convey the message from developing countries to the G-8 meeting. Dr Mahathir said except for France, others did not want to see poor countries coming to sit at the same table as the rich.

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