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Mahathir-Chinese

CHINESE CHAMBER OFFICIALS KEEN TO MEET PM PERSONALLY

By: Mikhail Raj Abdullah

KUALA LUMPUR, June 23 (Bernama) -- Top officials of the Chinese business community are keen to meet Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad to personally convey their wish that he continues to lead the country to greater heights.

Associated Chinese Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Malaysia (ACCCIM) Deputy Secretary-General, Datuk David Chua, said Malaysians should view what transpired at the Umno General Assembly positively.

This was because while they were shocked when Dr Mahathir announced his resignation as Umno president and Barisan Nasional chairman, the matter was resolved within an hour when he retracted his decision and that certainly came as a huge relief to Malaysians from all walks of life, Chua said.

"His announcement to resign is rather untimely as the business community as a whole still needs Dr Mahathir's able stewardship since there are still many unfinished issues in the agenda," he told Bernama in an interview here today.

Chua said that the Chinese business community was united behind Dr Mahathir as they were grateful for the Prime Minister's efforts in leading the country for the past 21 years.

He highlighted Dr Mahathir's zeal and statesmanship in defending Malaysia's economic independence and steering it away from the full brunt of the 1997 regional financial crisis.

He had done this through unorthodox financial measures, including imposing selective capital controls and pegging the ringgit at RM3.80 to the US dollar despite being chastised by the international market.

The capital controls proved to be crucial for they gave the Malaysian economy breathing space and enabled the introduction of expansionist market policies to stimulate the economy which was somewhat grinding to a halt then.

As a result, Malaysia came off better from the crisis compared with some neighbouring countries, which despite receiving funds from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), experienced social chaos and indebtedness.

Chua said Malaysians should put what happened over the weekend behind them and work harder to make the economy more resilient.

"It is fortunate that Dr Mahathir has decided to continue, which means things would go back to normal," he said.

-- BERNAMA

MR SHY JK