

LUBUK ANTU (SARAWAK), AUG 21 (BERNAMA) -- PRIME MINISTER DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR MOHAMAD TODAY HIT OUT AT CERTAIN GROUPS WHO HE SAID HAMPERED DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS ON THE PRETEXT OF WANTING TO PRESERVE THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT.

HE SAID THAT THESE GROUPS, CLAIMING TO BE ENVIRONMENTALISTS, TRIED TO INFLUENCE THE PEOPLE TO WITHDRAW SUPPORT FOR AND PROTEST AGAINST THE IMPLEMENTATION OF DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS SUCH AS HYDRO-ELECTRIC DAMS IN THEIR AREAS.

OPENING THE BATANG AI HYDRO-ELECTRIC STATION HERE, HE EXPRESSED REGRET OVER THIS ATTITUDE OF THESE +ENVIRONMENTALISTS+ WHO HE SAID WERE A PROGRESSIVE LOT WHO HAD BENEFITED FROM EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES GENERATED BY THE GOVERNMENT.

HE SAID THAT AFTER THEY HAD BENEFITED FROM THE SACRIFICES OF OTHERS AND FROM THE GOVERNMENT POLICIES, THEY HAD ATTEMPTED TO CHECK THE PROGRESS OF OTHERS, PARTICULARLY THOSE WHO WOULD BENEFIT FROM DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS.

THE PRIME MINISTER SAID THAT MALAYSIA WAS NOT A RICH NATION AND IT NEEDED ELECTRICITY FOR ITS DEVELOPMENT. -- MORE
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HE SAID THE +ENVIRONMENTALISTS+ THOUGHT THAT THE NATION HAD BECOME RICH AND THAT +WE CAN SIT BACK AND ENJOY THE BEAUTIFUL ENVIRONMENT+

THE PRIME MINISTER SAID THE PEOPLE WERE STILL SUFFERING AND +WE DO NOT WANT TO ENJOY THE BEAUTY OF NATURE WHILE OUR STOMACHS ARE HUNGRY, OUR HOUSES ARE UNCOMFORTABLE TO LIVE IN AND CLEANLINESS HAS NOT BEEN ACHIEVED,+ HE SAID.

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID THE BATANG AI PROJECT WAS IMPLEMENTED TO BRING ABOUT DEVELOPMENT.

HE SAID THOSE WHO OPPOSED THE CONSTRUCTION OF PROJECTS SUCH AS THIS ON THE PRETEXT OF WANTING TO PRESERVE THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT WERE ACTUALLY IRRESPONSIBLE ELEMENTS WHO WISHED TO PREVENT THE PEOPLE FROM ENJOYING THE BENEFITS OF GOVERNMENT DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS.

THE PRIME MINISTER SAID PEOPLE WHO WOULD BE AFFECTED BY THE CONSTRUCTION OF HYDRO-ELECTRIC PROJECTS SHOULD BE PREPARED TO SACRIFICE A LITTLE FOR WHICH THEY WOULD BE COMPENSATED BY THE GOVERNMENT AND BENEFIT LATER IN THE FORM OF JOB OPPORTUNITIES. -- MORE

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PEOPLE WHOSE LAND THE GOVERNMENT HAD TAKEN OVER FOR THE PROJECTS DID NOT LOSE OUT BECAUSE THEY WERE GIVEN COMPENSATION, THEY ENJOYED THE BENEFITS OF THE PROJECT AND OBTAINED JOBS, HE SAID.

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID THE HYDRO-ELECTRIC AND OIL RESOURCES IN SABAH, SARAWAK AND TERENGGANU WERE NOT MERELY FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE PEOPLE IN THOSE STATES BUT FOR DISTRIBUTION THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY.

HE SAID THAT THE RIVERS OF SARAWAK COULD BE HARNESSSED TO PROVIDE 80,000 MEGAWATTS OF ELECTRICITY.

THE PRIME MINISTER SAID THE GOVERNMENT WAS NOT KEEN ON NUCLEAR ENERGY TO PRODUCE POWER AND AT THE SAME TIME IT COULD NOT DEPEND ENTIRELY ON THE GENERATION OF ELECTRICITY FROM FUELS BECAUSE OF RISING COSTS.

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR IS IN SARAWAK ON A FIVE-DAY VISIT. TOMORROW, HE WILL OPEN THE SABERKAS BUILDING IN KUCHING.

CHIEF MINISTER DATUK PATINGGI HAJI ABDUL TAIB MAHMUD, ENERGY, TELECOMMUNICATIONS AND POSTS MINISTER DATUK LEO MOGGIE AND AGRICULTURE MINISTER ENCIK ANWAR IBRAHIM WERE AMONG THOSE PRESENT AT THE OPENING OF THE STATION.