

# Don't construe them as wasteful spending, PM tells the people

# Big projects create jobs

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By **BALAN MOSES**

**KUALA LUMPUR, Sun. —** Big projects undertaken by the Government may seem to be of no benefit to the people particularly at this time of economic slowdown but they are really meant to create jobs, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

It was therefore imperative for the people to understand the rationale behind the Government's implementation of large-scale projects. And these projects should not be misconstrued as wasteful spending by the Government, the Prime Minister added.

The jobs were meant to overcome the unemployment problem compounded

by recent retrenchment exercises.

"At a time when the nation is facing an economic slowdown, some of the projects being implemented by the Government may seem to be of no benefit and wasteful. But these projects are meant to create jobs," he said when launching the Desa Pandan housing project here.

The Prime Minister, on an official tour of the Federal Territory, was given a rousing welcome on arrival at the project site, a former tin-mining area.

A massive crowd, including hundreds of children waving miniature Malaysian flags and Wanita Umno members holding *bunga manggar*, was also on hand to greet the Prime Minister. A kompiang group and a traditional Indian music group were also part of

the opening ceremony.

Earlier, a motorcade comprising *Proton Sagas* and motorcycles escorted the Prime Minister's car to the project site.

Dignitaries present included Federal Territory Minister Datuk Shahrir Samad, Selangor Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Ahmad Razali, MCA president Tan Koon Swan and Deputy Housing and Local Government Minister Datuk S. Subramaniam.

Shouts of *Hidup Umno*, *Hidup Melayu* and *Hidup Mahathir* filled the air when the Prime Minister began his speech. Some Federal Territory Umno Youth members also sang *Inilah Bariisan Kita* and *Malaysia Berjaya*.

The Prime Minister said it was natural for people to question the wisdom behind big projects, especially at a time when the nation's revenue had fal-

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len because of the economic slowdown.

The Government, he pointed out, had not planned such projects in haste. Rather, they were conceived after careful study of the existing situation and the needs of the people.

The people would not lose anything because of such projects as the Government always had their interests at heart.

"We hope to reduce the effects of the economic slowdown by creating jobs so that the unemployed will have some form of livelihood."

He assured the people that the economic situation would improve if they gave their fullest support and co-operation to the Government in its efforts to stabilise the economy.

Elaborating on the reasons behind the economic slowdown, he said: "The current situation is not caused by us. It is due to the drop in primary commodity prices on the international market and the resulting shortfall in national revenue."

Thus, the private sector had a greater role to play in national development, in view of the Government's reduced earnings. This was among the reasons behind the introduction of the privatisation concept.

Dr Mahathir said the privatisation of some Government projects would also boost the construction industry which was facing hard times. Contractors, he said, could only use their equipment and staff if they had on-going projects.

The construction industry could thereby create more jobs for the unemployed.