

GOVT CREATING MORE JOBS FOR PEOPLE: PM

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IPOH, Thurs. — The Government is taking steps to create jobs and business opportunities to help the people face the economic slowdown, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

One of these is the lowering of the electricity tariff for the textile factories to help them remain in operation and reduce retrenchments.

Dr Mahathir said the Government was also giving out small contracts, such as those involving construction of roads and other amenities in rural places and in backward areas in towns, to create opportunities for small businesses.

Speaking at the unity gathering in the Municipal Padang here, he said many people had queried the government decision to go ahead with projects despite the economic slowdown.

"When we start projects such as highways, we create jobs. The people will be

deprived of a chance to earn an income if we scrap all our projects," he said.

Dr Mahathir said there were also several queries on why the Penang Bridge was built at a time of economic slowdown.

"The bridge was planned during Tun Abdul Razak's time when the country's economy was good, only that it was completed during a period of economic slowdown.

"It was also planned in response to appeals by the people in the north," he said.

Dr Mahathir added that an Opposition member in Penang had even threatened to jump off the bridge if the Government could successfully build one.

"But to this day I cannot find him, not because he has jumped but because he has fled," he quipped.

On the closure of tin mines, Dr Mahathir said it was caused by the lowering of the tin price.

"We are sad but we are not keeping quiet. We will take measures to raise the price," he said.

He said the Government

was mindful of the problems affecting the various communities.

He said the Opposition had nothing to show but to harp on the so-called government mistakes.

"The Opposition had even attempted to foil our gathering today. This is a unity gathering and not a rally," he stressed.

Dr Mahathir said the country had, since Merdeka, been ruled by parties which emphasised on the in-

terest of the country rather than on race. "We are not greedy. We sacrifice our needs in favour of consensus among the races and parties. The formation of Barisan Nasional allowed more parties to participate in governing the country. We achieved success as a result of it," he said.

Dr Mahathir said many people were jealous of the Government's success.

They include politicians and non-politicians who, though not interested in entering politics, insisted in condemning the Government, he added.

Later, Dr Mahathir said that the Government is making efforts to lower the prices of goods to lessen the burden of the people in the current economic slowdown.

However, he said, the Government alone could not do much as sellers were free to sell and determine prices.

"We thus appeal to the sellers to lower prices voluntarily as everyone would stand to benefit from it.

"We do not want to implement price control over goods because it will cause hardship and the goods tend to disappear from the market," he told a gathering during a dinner function at the Mentri Besar's residence.

Dr Mahathir said the government did not advocate boycott of any goods to force sellers to lower prices.

The Government was also trying to inculcate a new attitude among the people to make them more disciplined, efficient, trustworthy and more diligent.

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