

We're not out to win popularity — PM

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By K. BALA

BUKIT MERTAJAM, Sat. — The Government can go on a spending spree on projects to win popularity but this would mean the destruction of the nation, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

The Prime Minister said even during a recession the Government could choose to be popular by borrowing money and spending them on projects, but it opted instead for austerity.

This had paid dividends as evident by the 7.5 per cent economic growth rate achieved during the first six months of this year.

Not only had the bad times of 1984 and 1985 been overcome but the present economic recovery was one of the best in the world.

"The leadership is not here to win popularity but deliver the goods to the people who elected them through planned development," he said when launching the Penang-level Loyalty with the People Movement (Semarak) at the Mengkuang Dam area.

More than 80,000 people attended the gathering at the reservoir-cum-recreational area which the Prime Minister later named Taman Semarak at the request of the State Government as a monument to the concept of togetherness among the rakyat and leaders.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said the last thing the leadership wanted to do was lead the nation to bankruptcy.

"We have the resources and skills to be equal if not better than countries in the region and we want to show that Malaysians can develop their country."

He said the people should realise that at times large scale projects like

big buildings produce spin-off effects on the economy.

Such projects create employment and business opportunities for those like hardware dealers and stall holders.

He said the Government had no bad intentions towards anybody, be they Government servants or those from the private sector.

With the better performance of the economy, all sectors would gain.

However, he said certain groups were instilling hatred for their own personal and political interests which the people must guard against.

Earlier, Education Minister Anwar Ibrahim criticised certain former leaders who only now claimed to be

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champions of the people when they did not do so while in office.

"Now that they are no longer in the Government they are resorting to such tactics for their own political interest."

Encik Anwar said a true leader will spend his time mixing with the rakyat from all walks of life to know their problems.

He called on Penangites to support the leadership and Government.

Chief Minister Dr Lim Chong Eu said the State Government would have more activities to bring the people and Government closer.

"The people of Penang will continue to support the Government under the leadership of Dr Mahathir as they know that he and the Government are working for the benefit of all the people," he said.