

It's a form of bribery, says PM

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KOTA KINABALU, Sat. — Semangat 46's promises contained in its manifesto, especially on oil royalty for States, is a form of bribery, Datuk ~~Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad~~ said here today.

The Prime Minister and Barisan Nasional chairman was asked to comment on the manifesto at a Press conference to wind up his one-day visit to the State.

"The strange thing is

that before this they didn't make this statement. Only when the elections comes around, they suddenly want to give royalties.

"In fact, this person was the one who determined what amount of royalty should be given to the States.

"Why didn't he propose it earlier?" Asked who this person was, he said "Tengku Razaleigh."

Asked what was his

answer to the Opposition manifesto in view of Sabah State Government's requests for more oil royalty and the unconditional reversion of Labuan to the State, Dr Mahathir said:

"We don't answer such questions during election...that means bribery. You know, we are not trying to buy people over.

"What we are trying to do is to form the new Government.

"Of course, I can answer. I can always make statements such as 'we will not tax anybody', 'we will not do anything', 'we will give everything free to everybody'.

"But to do all these things, we need money. I am not fishing for votes," he said.

Dr Mahathir earlier met Barisan Nasional leaders led by PBS president Datuk Seri Joseph Pairin Kitingan and Usno president Tun Datu Haji Mustapha Datu Harun.

He held a closed-door dialogue with the BN leaders, candidates as well as former MPs who were not defending their seats.

The Prime Minister said after the dialogue that both PBS and Usno had pledged to expel any of their members who stood as independents against candidates from either party.