

DR M: DON'T BE FOOLED

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● PM: Opposition making unrealistic promises

LABUAN, Sun. — Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and MCA president Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik criticised the opposition today for making unrealistic and irresponsible promises.

Dr Mahathir said the Barisan Nasional government would not make promises which it could not fulfil while Dr Ling described the opposition manifesto as "the height of irresponsibility and money politics."

Dr Mahathir, addressing a gathering at the community hall here, said the Barisan did not promise to abolish taxes for the sake of winning the general election.

He criticised opposition parties which made such promises and hoped the people would not be fooled by such pledges.

If the opposition truly wanted to abolish taxes if they formed the next government, they would have to borrow money to run the government machinery, he said.

Deprived of sources of revenue, the country would go bankrupt and be without funds to finance development.

Dr Mahathir said the Barisan would not promise to abolish taxes but would implement a moderate tax policy not burdensome to the people.

Dr Ling, speaking to reporters after opening the 8th annual general meeting of the Koperasi Jayadiri Malaysia Berhad (Kojadi) at the Wisma MCA in Kuala Lumpur, said the opposition manifesto was an irresponsible election gimmick.

He said the opposition had promised many things without giving a total bill or the source of funding.

He said Malaysia borrowed \$50 billion when Semangat 46 president Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah was Finance Minister.

Dr Mahathir regretted that certain people made an issue of Labuan being run by the Federal Government for their political interests.

He said the Federal Government gained nothing by putting Labuan under its administration.

Instead, it had to bear development and operating expenditures as Labuan's revenue alone could not meet the operating expenditure.

The Federal Government had agreed to administer Labuan as a federal territory to improve the lot of the islanders and be at par with the living standards of citizens in the other states.

Dr Mahathir hoped the people of Labuan were not taken in by claims that "outsiders" had gained much

from development of the island.

He said federal officers from the other states were not in Labuan to deprive the people here of jobs.

"They are here because their expertise is needed to ensure smooth implementation of development efforts. If the local people can take over the task, these officers will not serve here anymore," he said.

Dr Mahathir hoped the people of Labuan would not reject outsiders especially foreign investors who would bring the technology and capital to improve Labuan's economy.

He said the people of Labuan must look positively at the Federal Government's determination to develop the island for their own good.

"I like to remind the people here that in striving for a better life, we should show gratitude to God for our prosperity," Dr Mahathir said.

The Prime Minister's address to the gathering, attended by about 1,000 people, was his first function here today after arriving from Kota Kinabalu yesterday with his wife Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Ali.

Also present were Chief Secretary to the Government Tan Sri Ahmad Sarji Abdul Hamid, Labuan's administrative director Abdul Rahman Murad, Labuan Umno and Barisan chairman Isli Siput, the Barisan candidate for Labuan Abdol Mulok Awang Damit, Barisan party and community leaders.