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Mahathir-privatisation

(EMBARGO: For release after 10pm, Sept 2)

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KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 2⁹¹ (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said tonight the government will always have to face allegations that only certain groups are benefiting from the privatisation policy but it will not be inhibited by such talk.

The Prime Minister said whoever took over a service under the privatisation policy would inevitably be considered +certain people+ because the process must involve two parties -- the government and the private sector.

+If it is not this person, then it's that person. But the perception is that whoever benefits is that 'certain person',+ he said in the +Wawancara Bersama Perdana Menteri+ interview over TV1 of RTM.

He said this when asked to clarify what was said to be a +popular topic+ concerning claims that privatisation was benefiting certain people more and did not benefit the general public.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said the government had to pick those capable when deciding whom to privatise its entities to.

+When we pick someone capable, whoever it may be, he would be considered that certain person. This is our problem,+ he added. -- more

♥02/09/22-27MST

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+Could we let someone incapable take over a government service?+ he asked.

He said selecting someone incapable would be tantamount to giving plenty of money to aspiring businessmen who lacked the know-how to spend the money wisely to bring in profits.

To a question, he conceded that there was a risk of the people becoming less loyal to the government because of the focus on the private sector following the privatisation programme.

+But we feel loyalty should be directed to the nation, not the government,+ he said, adding that the government was something not permanent.

He said it would suffice if the people were loyal to the nation because this meant that they would definitely support whoever looked after the country well. -- more

♥02/09/22-30MST

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He said privatisation was something inevitable not only in Malaysia but also throughout the world as it had become a priority.

The Prime Minister said privatisation, which was implemented quite early in the country, was necessary to ensure better services and speedier action in certain situations to avoid losses.

+In the government, we cannot act that fast because of the government structure,+ he said.

In government service, things had to go through certain levels right up to the Cabinet for a decision, and this would slow down the process.

He cited as an example Syarikat Telekom which needed to make quick decisions to adopt and use new systems.

The panel of interviewers comprised Institute of Strategic and International Studies (ISIS) senior fellow Rustam A. Sani, Utusan Melayu (M) Bhd Group Editor-in-Chief Zainuddin Maidin and Associate Professor Dr Ishak Shari of Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia's Economics Faculty. -- Bernama