

Prime Minister promises to restore Sabah's wealth if people back Barisan

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KOTA KINABALU, Sun. — Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today called on the people of Sabah to return the Barisan Nasional to govern the State, with a promise that it will strive to restore Sabah as one of the richest States in Malaysia.

The Prime Minister said the return of the BN to Sabah was very important because under the Parti Bersatu Sabah (PBS), the State was not properly developed.

Whatever wealth and opportunities it had were not fairly distributed among the people despite all the promises, he said.

"But the BN is different. We never make empty promises. When we make promises, we fulfil them," Dr Mahathir said when opening the second convention of the Liberal Democratic Party here.

He added that the BN would serve the people with full commitment if they voted in the BN.

"All of you are witnesses ... this is not a political promise. It's real. As in the past, we deliver," Dr Mahathir, who is BN chairman, said to loud applause from the delegates in the packed school hall.

Dr Mahathir added that under the BN Government, Malaysia's economy had grown tremendously with an inflation rate of 4.7 per cent last year and an unemployment rate of four per cent only. Going by international reckoning, the four per cent rate was considered full employment, he said.

He added that the rate could have been even lower. But this did not happen because two States — Sabah and Kelantan — are inefficient and are not progressing.

Dr Mahathir said that the lack of opportunities in the two opposition-ruled States had forced many people to seek jobs and opportunities in next-door Sarawak and

other States in the peninsula.

"It is unfortunate that in the midst of wealth (enjoyed by Malaysia), there is poverty and in the midst of full employment, there is unemployment (in Sabah)," he said.

He said the people of Sabah could not depend on the PBS Government to serve their interests because the opposition have not delivered the goods.

The Prime Minister said the PBS president and Chief Minister, Datuk Seri Joseph Pairin Kitingan, had promised to serve the people riding on the slogan of "Sabah for Sabahans".

But the benefits were only for members of his family and close friends, Dr Mahathir said, adding that Pairin, in trying to achieve his own goal, had split the unity in Usno by offering ministerial posts to Usno leaders and increasing the salaries of State Ministers.

He said the people should be fully aware of the fact that the BN loved Sabah and its people, and this is the driving force for the BN to return to govern the State.

The BN success in running the country's administration and serving the people has already received international recognition.

Even countries which had once doubted the BN Government's capability were sending representatives to Malaysia to learn how the Government had managed to develop a plural society successfully, Dr Mahathir said.

Dr Mahathir said: "We serve not for the sake of positions or for increased salaries. We can also increase our salaries. After all there are only 25 of us."

"But we don't do this because we're not there to become rich but to serve the people. What is the point of having so much money? Everything is provided for.

That should be sufficient," he added as the crowd applauded.

The problem in Sabah was that the PBS only want to serve their own interests, not that of the people.

He questioned Pairin on why the State Government decided to sell its timber through Hong Kong.

"When we asked them to sell direct to Japan, they refused to export it anymore. Why Hong Kong? We want them to explain," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the PBS Government had accused the Federal Government of not supporting it.

He said he did not see why the Federal Government should support the opposition Government when it (PBS) had been making destructive criticisms about the Federal Government, and even to the extent of

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attempting to pull Sabah out of Malaysia.

Dr Mahathir and his wife Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamed Ali were welcomed at the old airport terminal by a big crowd of supporters and well-wishers.

Dr Mahathir and Siti Hasmah shook hands with a long line of State Barisan Nasional leaders and heads of Federal and State Government departments and agencies.

Land and Co-operative Development Minister Tan Sri Sakaran Dandai, Information Minister Datuk Mohamed Rahmat, Deputy Housing and Local Government Minister Osu Sukam and Deputy Information Minister Ranney Jeffrey were among those present.

Angkatan Keadilan Rakyat (Akar) president Datuk Mark Koding, Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) president Chong Kah Kiat and several Umno divisional heads were also at the airport.