

Close ties with KL can boost growth

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KUCHING, Wed. — Development in Sarawak is rapid because the State Government has forged a close relationship with the Federal Government, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

He said that because of this, the people of Sarawak were enjoying more benefits than those in Sabah.

He said the people in other States would also enjoy similar benefits if their State Governments did not adopt a confrontational attitude in their relations with the Federal Government.

Dr Mahathir was responding to questions by reporters during a Press conference at Kuching International Airport at the end of his three-day stay here where he attended the National Day celebration. He later flew to Labuan, from where he proceeded to Terumbu Layang-Layang.

To another question, he said in a federation like Malaysia, both the Federal and State Governments had certain powers. When these powers were abused, it would lead to differences that would affect the administrative and development processes, he added.

Time and money would also be wasted if a State Government adopted a confrontational attitude, he said.

That was why when relations between the State and Federal Governments were close, all administrative matters could run smoothly and it would be better for the people, he said.

Answering another question, Dr Mahathir said the Sarawak Government was not like the Sabah Government which tried to gain popularity among its people by appealing to popular sentiments.

The Sarawak Government's popularity was mainly based on the efficiency, capability and effec-

tiveness of its administration, he said.

On the other hand, the Sabah administration was more concerned about its political stand by harping on the Sabah for Sabahans issue as if State was outside Malaysia, he said.

Asked about efforts by the Parti Bersatu Sabah-led Government to mend ties with the Federal Government, Dr Mahathir said they lacked sincerity.

"I must admit that after the experience of the way they played politics in the last general election, we are

doubtful of their intentions."

He said these doubts referred to the leaders in Sabah and not its people.

On politics in Sarawak, Dr Mahathir said he would leave the issue of the return of Parti Bansa Dayak Sarawak (PBDS) to the State Barisan Nasional fold to the leaders of the BN component parties in the State.

He said it was up to the State BN to decide on the date of PBDS' return to the coalition if the State BN leaders so wished.

Asked to elaborate on his

statement at the laying of the foundation stone of the Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (Unimas) in Samarahan yesterday that more universities could be built in Sarawak, he said:

"A university is not merely a status symbol but is built when there is a need. The setting up of (the country's) eighth university in Sarawak is because of the increasing demand of the population for a university. In the future, perhaps there will be a need for more universities. But I do not promise when."