

Dr M: Audit of projects during PBS rule

NSI - APR 1994

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KOTA KINABALU, Sat. — An extensive audit will be carried out to ascertain how and to whom the Parti Bersatu Sabah Government allocated projects, timber concessions and contracts during its rule, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

He said the audit would help ascertain who had benefited from these projects and in the event of any malpractice, action would be taken against those involved.

Speaking at a meet-the-people session at Wisma Muis in the State capital, Dr Mahathir said during the nine years the PBS was in power, the Federal Government was not informed how the State revenue was spent and whether the State Government's actions were lawful.

He said the newly-formed Barisan Nasional State Government would be held accountable for all its actions and the Federal Government would keep close tabs on the State administration.

"If the Barisan Nasional cannot help improve the livelihood of the people of Sabah, there is no point for us to hold on to power," he said, adding that the Barisan would rather lose the State if it could not fulfil aspirations of the people.

"The first thing we will do is to establish clear guidelines on the functions of the State Government machinery to ensure smooth implementation of policies and the development process.

"This has been lacking in previous State Governments, resulting in State leaders helping themselves to the State's riches without regard for the people," he said.

Dr Mahathir said previous Sabah State Governments, including those which were under the Alliance and later the Barisan Nasional, had wanted independent control of the State which had resulted in the leaders getting rich at the expense of the people.

He said the people of Sabah had changed governments three times but each time the leaders of the parties which came to power decided to use their power to become rich instead of helping the people and this had disappointed the people.

The Federal Government was aware of this but could do little since it had agreed that the party which won in the State should be allowed to rule the State under minimum supervision from Kuala Lumpur.

Sabah was one of the richest States and would have been the most progressive State if it had been properly administered.

Dr Mahathir gave an assurance to the people of Sabah that the Barisan would concentrate its efforts on bringing progress and development to the State and improve the living standards of the people.

He promised that apart from using State revenue to bring basic amenities and improved facilities for all, the Federal Government would also continue to inject more money into the State to bring it on par with or make it more progressive

than other States.

In the last State elections, the Barisan had offered an alternative to the PBS Government but lost narrowly because many people were influenced by the PBS slogan "Sabah for Sabahans," the so-called Kadazan nationalism and religious sentiments highlighted by the then State Government, he said.

He added that he had forecast the PBS Government would last only six months but even before that many PBS State Assemblymen had become disillusioned with the party's leadership and joined the Barisan, thus allowing the national coalition to form the State Government.

"We will focus our immediate attention on implementing rural development programmes so that the people can have basic amenities enjoyed by those in the urban areas.

"The Federal Government will take steps to ensure that the State Government does not follow the policies of previous State governments and instead toil for the betterment of the people of Sabah," Dr Mahathir said.

"The Federal and State governments will have a close relationship so that development programmes can be implemented at a faster pace and regulations will be strictly followed to ensure there is no mismanagement.

"People of all races and religions will get fair treatment and the wealth of the State will be used to benefit all. We assure you a good government which will be a servant of the people and not their master," Dr Mahathir added.