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Mahathir-Foundation

SABAH PEOPLE CHEATED OF AS MUCH AS RM4 BILLION, SAYS MAHATHIR

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KOTA KINABALU, May 31<sup>94</sup> (Bernama) -- Between RM3-4 billion were missing from the Sabah Foundation under the previous governments, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad disclosed today.

He said: "I found that the people of Sabah have been cheated because a study so far showed that between RM3,000 million and RM4,000 million have disappeared."

The sum should have been held by the Sabah Foundation or the state government but the state government was found to be short of funds, he added.

"We wish to know who is responsible for this. It should not have happened because it is the people's money," he told a press conference at the airport here before returning to Kuala Lumpur after closing the "Pesta Kaamatan" (Harvest Festival) at the Dewan Hongkod Koisaan in Penampang, near here.

Dr Mahathir said the government was investigating the operations of the foundation to rid it of any malpractices. -- more

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Mahathir-Foundation 2 Kota Kinabalu

He said each time a new government was formed in Sabah previously, there was a propensity for them to take back land that had been given to certain people and re-distributed to others.

"Each time this occurred, where some people had already spent a lot on it and thought the land belonged to them, it was suddenly taken back and given to others. So we have to investigate to ascertain who is the rightful owner (of the timber land belonging to the foundation)," he added.

Dr Mahathir said the Barisan Nasional government wanted an in-depth investigation because it did not wish to see a continuance of the unfair administration existing during the rule of the three previous governments.

He added: "If we rule like what was done before, like the three previous governments, and we take back to give to our friends... it is not fair.

"So, we want to know the basis of the distribution of the land, the issue of licences and such. We want to rule Sabah with justice for all. Although they are from the opposition, we must be just. -- more

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Mahathir-Foundation 3 (last) Kota Kinabalu

Sabah Foundation subsidiaries were among state government agencies audited by a private company after they failed to submit their annual financial reports.

The foundation's new board of directors, chaired by Sabah Chief Minister Tan Sri Sakaran Dandai, removed Datuk Dr Jeffrey Ditingan as director and appointed State Secretary Datuk Khalil Jamalul as interim administrator.

At its sitting early this month, the State Legislative Assembly approved a bill providing for the State Auditor to carry out an audit of the foundation.

Dr Mahathir said the present state government, which took office two months ago, had established a firm and orderly administration.

However, there remained the problem of ascertaining the situation before the BN government took over administration of the state, he added. "Was there malpractice or not? Who committed the malpractice, who took the rights of the people for themselves? We want to investigate all these," he said. -- Bernama

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