

05 JUL 1996

Mahathir

GOVERNMENT TO CONTINUE ASSISTING PRIVATE SECTOR

JOHOR BAHRU, July 5 (Bernama) -- The government will continue to give its assistance to the private sector in order to make them successful, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

"This government is dedicated to making lives good for the people of Malaysia," he said at the official launch of the RM6 billion JB Waterfront City project.

"The government together with the private sector have helped develop the country," he said.

Taking a dig at the foreign press, in particular the Far Eastern Economic Review (FEER) magazine, Dr Mahathir said by helping the private sector, "we are helping the government".

"And, in helping the government, we are actually helping the people of Malaysia," he added.

The master developer of the JB Waterfront City project is Johor Coastal Development Sdn Bhd, a subsidiary of Pilecon Engineering Bhd, whose Executive Chairman Hong Lee Pee said at the launch that government assistance had lifted Pilecon onto a different and higher platform.

Hong said Pilecon had started out with a RM32 million piling and foundation contract for the Dayabumi complex in Kuala Lumpur with a short time frame of six months.

The company would be penalised RM80,000 per day for late completion or a bonus of RM50,000 per day for early completion. Pilecon completed it in four months to earn a bonus of RM3 million.

In lambasting the FEER, Dr Mahathir said he was sure that the foreign press would now say that Hong had succeeded as he was a friend of the Prime Minister.

"They will take pictures to show Hong is close to and succeeded because of the PM," he added.

"I have thousands of friends, some are as poor as a church mouse."

Dr Mahathir said he helped those with the ability, and "if they succeed, the country succeeds as others can tag along with the opportunities and in the end, everybody would succeed.

"We want them to succeed for it is good for the country. I would like to remind the FEER and all, that the government has a 30 percent share in all projects, without putting in any capital, in the form of the tax on profits," he said.

"The Malaysian government may be different from some other governments for we feel that the interest of the business sector is our interest."

He added that the government collected some RM22 billion in taxes in 1995 with a substantial amount of this coming from corporate and individual taxes.

He noted that the poor did not pay tax "and, if all Malaysians are poor and could not pay tax, then the country could not be developed".

On preserving the environment, Dr Mahathir said the government and the Johor state government had hopes of building a bridge and not a Causeway over the Tebrau Straits.

He said the Causeway might even be demolished to enable the waters to flow again and back to its natural state.

"This is our hope and we do not know if it will materialise but it will not be wrong to make the preparations from now by not closing down the shipping routes in the Tebrau Straits," he added. -- BERNAMA

THG ABG