

14/06/1998

PM reminds Bumis about benefits

KUANTAN, Sat. - Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today reminded Malaysians, in particular Bumiputeras who are in comfortable positions in government and private sectors, to ask themselves how national policies and systems had benefited them.

"They don't go up themselves," he said, adding the fact that some six million Bumiputeras had been able to invest in various companies through Permodalan Nasional Bhd was a clear indication that the Government did not practise cronyism.

"We could have given them (the shares) to somebody close to our hearts but we didn't. Instead, we gave them to these six million people," the Prime Minister told reporters after launching the RM700 million Pahang Cement Sdn Bhd plant in Bukit Sagu, about 50km from here.

Asked whether Umno Youth chief Datuk Ahmad Zahid Hamidi was in a position to speak about cronyism when he himself was appointed by the Government as chairman of Bank Simpanan Nasional, Dr Mahathir said: "I have no comments."

He had earlier, in his speech, said the country's economic problems were slowly seeping into its politics.

Asked to elaborate, Dr Mahathir said:

"Once the economy is under stress, the politics will also get into that stage. For example in Indonesia, when the economy was under stress after the removal of subsidies, there was a political upheaval and the demand for the Suharto Government to be overthrown."

On whether the decision to abolish the umbrella concept in the award of contracts to build village roads was made under pressure due to the increasing allegations of cronyism and nepotism, Dr Mahathir said:

"We have never practised cronyism and nepotism but the problem is that whoever you give (the contracts to) immediately becomes a crony."

(END)