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Mahathir-Development

PROJECTS ARE TO SERVE PEOPLE'S INTERESTS- DR MAHATHIR

KUCHING, Aug 27 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today the government is implementing various development projects to serve the people's interests and in doing so has not neglected the environment.

Malaysia was not wasting money on projects to show off its capabilities and project its leadership, he said.

"If we are wasteful, we will be using government funds to erect statues of Dr Mahathir," he said.

"We are not doing all this...we are putting up buildings which are beneficial... we want cheap electricity and implemented the Bakun hydro project (which has since been postponed)," he said when commissioning the RM150 million Sungai Sarawak Barrage and Shiplock project.

Dr Mahathir said roads, airports and expansion of ports were all for the people's benefit.

He said the country's buildings and infrastructure projects had high aesthetic value which justified the money spent on them to make Malaysia attractive to both locals and visitors.

The Prime Minister said such projects were in line with Malaysia's Vision to make the country a developed nation by 2020 but this aspiration had been momentarily stifled by the speculative attacks on the ringgit and the stock market.

Dr Mahathir said indeed any government aspiring to be re-elected by the people had to strive to develop the country.

He also refuted claims by certain groups that Malaysia was felling its forests in the name of development.

"We are not felling to the extent that there are no trees left..we only allow certain trees to be felled and we are also concerned about the habitat of wild animals," he said.

Dr Mahathir commended the Sarawak Government for implementing the river barrage project which formed part of the Sungai Sarawak Control Scheme.

He urged the people to help keep the rivers clean and consider them as a gift from God and should be well taken care of.

"We have attained progress and our civilisation has reached new heights and hence we have to look after the river and not consider it as a sewerage system or a place to throw rubbish," he said.

He said not many countries had rivers such as those found in Malaysia or the ones in Sarawak.

During his visit to Namibia, he recalled that the country's Foreign Minister had told him that he and his son were flying in a helicopter and his son wanted to know what was that flowing down below.

When told it was a river, the son asked why there was water in the river for the son was used to seeing only the dried-up river beds in the desert.

For the people in the dry lands of Namibia and the Sahara desert the river was a great bounty from God, the Prime Minister added.

Sarawak Chief Minister Tan Sri Abdul Taib Mahmud said the Sarawak River Regulation Scheme was implemented to overcome future development challenges.

He said Kuching was projected to have more than 1.5 million people by the year 2020 and the project would serve their interests apart from ensuring the river's cleanliness and checking erosion.

The project is expected to check flash floods, muddy sediment pollution

of the Damai beach in Santubong and control saline sea water flow inland.

Abdul Taib said the development of Kuching City and its metropolitan would be from four angles each with its own unique features.

The first angle would be from Santubong which had rich tourism potential, the second one from Telaga Air a suburban area supporting a big population.

Kuching City would also develop from Bau township where attention would be focused on bringing progress to the Bidayuh community with employment in modern sectors and roads were being opened in the area of Samarahan as part of Kuching's development.

"While these areas are being developed, the city centre is not that organised as the network of rivers is giving problems," he said.

The Sungai Sarawak Regulation Scheme is being developed under several phases with work on phase one having started in August 1992.

-- BERNAMA
MAM OPP AAM