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Mahathir-Wealth

RACIAL TENSION CURBED VIA FAIR WEALTH DISTRIBUTION, SAYS DR M

KOTA KINABALU, Nov 27 (Bernama) -- Fair and equitable distribution of the country's wealth had enabled Malaysia to curb racial tension among its multi-racial community, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said tonight.

The prime minister said through the National Economic Policy (NEP) introduced after the May 13 racial riots, the government managed to distribute the country's wealth fairly although certain groups had initially criticised the NEP.

"Many criticised us as the NEP is said to be not based on meritocracy but we went ahead with it. In 20 years, we managed to bridge the disparities in wealth among the various races," he said when speaking at an all-community dinner here.

As a result of the prevailing peace, political stability and racial unity, the government could implement many infrastructure development projects including sophisticated buildings and an international airport that could handle up to 25 million passengers a year, he said.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia's rapid development could be seen throughout the country including in Sabah which had been turned into a fast developing state.

He said the government needed to take into account the country's forward planning before embarking on a development programme.

He also urged leaders of the various ethnic groups in Sabah to play their role in ensuring the people's well-being.

In his speech, Chief Minister Tan Sri Bernard Dompok said the Barisan Nasional's (BN) power-sharing concept was truly realised when the BN took over the helm of the state administration in 1994.

"Since then, there is enhanced political harmony in Sabah than before," said Dompok, who is also Sabah BN chairman.

The continued political stability and racial harmony gave confidence to the Sabah BN that the people would return the ruling coalition to power in the soon-to-be held state election, he added.

-- BERNAMA

JS/MAM TS