

19/12/1998

Settlers' schemes a success, says PM

Fadzil Ghazali

MALAYSIA has succeeded in developing an unequalled arrangement in helping settlers develop the country's land and become important players in Malaysia's primary industries.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said through schemes like the Federal Land Development Authority (Felda), the settlers have managed to generate favourable income for them and their families.

"Some countries try to emulate our settlers' schemes but they are not very successful," he told a house packed with 1,500 leaders of Felda settlers in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

He said Zimbabwe had tried similar approach by taking plantations, formerly owned by the "Mat Sallehs", and given them to its people so they can become settlers.

"The taking over of plantations from the Mat Sallehs is good. Unfortunately, those gained these new plantations do not know how to manage them. In the end, wealth was not generated. Instead, losses were made," he added.

Dr Mahathir said the situation in Malaysia is totally different, where even during the present times of economic crisis, the settlers who owned oil palm plantations are making bigger profits than before.

"The Felda's approach has brought great benefits to settlers. Those having lands near strategic towns becomes instant millionaire as their land value goes up when the area is developed.

"It is so successful that it creates problems. Now, the settlers are faced with the problem of success. Their children, having earned quality education, are now professionals. There are no one to succeed them in developing the land schemes," he added.

Dr Mahathir also reminded the settlers that they are external forces who envied Malaysia's success and aimed to impoverish the country's economy to make the country poor.

"Not many are aware of their intentions to re-colonise Malaysia... When they devalued our currency, we become poorer. Then they come in to lend us money but not to help our economy, but merely to settle our debts."

Dr Mahathir said this is the approach taken by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) where it imposed very strict conditions to the aid that its disbursed.

"Malaysia will not bow to the IMF because if we do, they will come in and take over the country's economy... We will be re-colonised again," he added.

Dr Mahathir who had live through four colonisation era said nothing is being done whenever a country is colonised as the purpose is more of exploiting the country's wealth.

"They want to colonise us again. That is why we see their interference in our politics... It is indeed sad that we have political crisis at present when we are already faced with an economic turmoil," he added.

Dr Mahathir said if in Iraq, the US administration does not like President Saddam Hussein, here in Malaysia, Washington is not happy with the existing Prime Minister.

"We can see what they have done to Iraq. Thousands of children are killed because of not happy with Saddam. If you do not like me, do not torture the rakyat of Malaysia," he added.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia will not be re-colonised if the rakyat is

united and oppose them.

On the issue of Deputy Prime Minister, he noted that he had to sack Datuk Seri Dr Anwar Ibrahim because a country's leader must be a good person with high moral values.

The Prime Minister told reporters later that he is still considering who among the many candidates should be his new deputy.

"I'm still thinking and I have not decided... There are a lot of people in mind, people who apparently consider they are eligible."

Umno has three vice presidents namely Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, who is also Foreign Minister, Education Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak and former Selangor Menteri Besar Tan Sri Muhammad Haji Muhamad Taib who had been granted leave by the party.

The DPM post fell vacant following the expulsion of Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim from the Cabinet last September 2 and from Umno the next day.

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