

19 FEB 1999

Sabah-Confrontation

AVOID CONFRONTATIONAL STAND AGAINST FEDERAL GOVT, SAYS KURUP

KENINGAU, Feb 19 (Bernama) -- Sabahans were today told to discard their confrontational attitude against the federal government and instead strive to forge cordial ties for the continued development of this resource-rich state.

In making the call, Deputy Chief Minister Datuk Joseph Kurup said any move to isolate the state from the federal government, as was practised by an opposition party before, would only render Sabah lagging behind in development.

"If we are always engaged in a confrontation with others, nobody will come to help us and the people will not support us because they will be fed up with our confrontational and isolationist attitudes," he said when speaking at a leader-with-the-people gathering attended by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad at the Keningau community hall, here.

On the contrary, Sabah saw development trickling in when the Barisan Nasional (BN) took over the state administration in 1994, he said.

This change came about with the close federal-state ties, said Kurup, who is president of Parti Bersatu Rakyat Sabah (PBRs), a component of the seven-member Sabah BN.

He also regretted the negative perception of certain people who questioned the sincerity of Dr Mahathir and other federal leaders coming to Sabah, alleging that they are here to seize power and take away the rights of Sabahans.

Kurup urged the people to continue their support to ensure the BN government remained at the helm of the state administration as it had carried out various development projects despite the country facing an economic downturn.

"I sincerely appeal to those who sympathise with the struggles of the opposition parties not to hesitate to change their allegiance and support the BN government to ensure continuity in the development programmes planned for the state," he said.

He also advised Sabahans not to be fascinated by the opposition's tempting promises as they were made merely to serve their political interests.

Refuting opposition claims that the BN had failed to bring about rapid development 100 days after winning the last state election in 1994, he said the government had implemented development projects continuously till today.

Kurup also said the BN government had effectively dealt with the illegal immigrants problem in Sabah which the opposition government failed while in power.

The illegal immigrant population had dwindled significantly following enforcement crackdowns mounted by the authorities, he added.

-- BERNAMA

RAR TS