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Mahathir-Umno (Projects)

BIG PROJECTS HELP TO INCREASE PEOPLE'S INCOME- DR MAHATHIR

KUALA LUMPUR, June 18 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today big projects implemented by the government help the people and contribute to the country's development and are not wasteful.

The Prime Minister said Malaysia needed big projects to help in its rapid development.

"Big projects usually help to increase the people's income with increasing demand on infrastructure such as electricity, water and others," Dr Mahathir who is Umno President said in his policy address when opening the 53rd Umno General Assembly at the Putra World Trade Centre here.

He said big projects were important to the success of the nation and in expediting the country's development process as small projects like poor people would not be able to contribute.

For instance, he said, the development of Putrajaya was not wasteful but in fact it had helped to save the government's expenditure.

(Putrajaya is 40km south of Kuala Lumpur and will be the new seat of the Federal Government. The Prime Minister's Department will operate from there from Monday).

The Prime Minister said the property value in Kuala Lumpur had increased very much but it no longer brought returns to the government.

Hence the sale of this property would help to pay for the development costs of Putrajaya. The increased value of land owned by the government in Putrajaya, a growth centre with potentials, would generate profits to the government when it was developed later on.

As a huge project, Putrajaya would be the catalyst of economic growth to the area itself and the country as a whole.

"Far from being a waste, Putrajaya is a big asset to the country. Putrajaya is not only for today. It is for the nation's future, for Vision 2020, for the future generation for a country which has matured and developed," he said.

He said Putrajaya would be developed to ease Kuala Lumpur's traffic congestion which was due to its rapid development and increase in the population from 300,000 at the time of independence to about two million now.

Dr Mahathir said many countries in the world wished to have a new administrative centre which was more comfortable and sophisticated but were not able to have it due to a number of factors.

"On the contrary we successfully built, within a period of only three years, a sophisticated administrative centre appropriate to an era of modern technology which would be inherited by the people."

"Foreigners actually are envious because we are able to develop Putrajaya on our own, based on our plan, managed and built by us. Here I wish to congratulate those involved in the development of Putrajaya especially those women engineers and professionals who have played a major role in the project."

"I am impressed because they have proven the ability of the Malay professional women," Dr Mahathir said.

"When the foreigners realised that they did not get any opportunity from the development of Putrajaya they hated it and are envious of us because we need not borrow from foreign countries or get foreign expertise."

"Hence they accuse us of wasting the country's money. If the

development of Putrajaya was contracted out to them, would they reject such a big contract on the basis that it was a waste of the country's money?"

"Malaysians therefore should not be easily hoodwinked by their claims that we in Malaysia, especially me, are wasting the country's money on big projects."

"We are not that stupid. If we are wasteful we will definitely be poor and begging from them and accepting their conditions when our ringgit and shares at the Kuala Lumpur Stock Exchange were attacked by them."

"We were not only able to protect our economy but also able to revive it more speedily than other countries which were also attacked."

"Therefore have confidence in our own ability and we should not believe that only foreigners are smart and capable."

Dr Mahathir said projects in Malaysia handled either by the private sector or the Government were really huge as there would be benefits from the economies of scale and big profits also generate bigger profits.

"If only one house is built in an isolated area, not only will the cost be high but it will not be a catalyst for growth in the surrounding areas and will not yield any economic spin-off," he said.

He also mentioned several big projects which had contributed to the country's development such as the development of Petaling Jaya and Shah Alam and the KL International Airport in Sepang.

For instance, Pulau Lumut which before did not have any resident or any economic activity but now had become Pulau Indah, a growth centre worth billions of ringgit, the Prime Minister said.

-- BERNAMA
KHY MAI AAM