

21 MAR 1999

Mahathir-Popularity

COUNTRIES WILL NOT PROGRESS IF LEADERS ARE ONLY POPULAR, SAYS MAHATHIR

ALOR SETAR, March 21 (Bernama) -- Countries with leaders who are popular but lack capability will not be able to attain any progress, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

"A government cannot be made up of only one person," he said.

Speaking at a gathering of Kedah Barisan Nasional (BN) leaders at the Wisma Darul Aman here, he criticised quarters said to be popular for their struggles over certain issues but actually do so just to win votes.

He cited as examples those taking advantage to become popular by claiming to fight for the orang Asli following the government's proposal to construct the Sungai Selangor dam and protesting against the increase in toll charges.

"If they are truly fighting for the orang Asli, why is that they have not been bothered over their welfare all this while," he said.

"We ask them how much toll charges have they paid. Actually, they themselves have never paid any toll charges," he said.

The government, he said, could become popular by providing everything that the people wanted, for free.

"We do not only want votes, we want to develop the country," he said.

Dr Mahathir said that the country would only progress if the ruling party comprised parties capable of ruling efficiently.

He dismissed the notion that the country would still achieve progress even if it was ruled by other parties as that was the responsibility of the government.

"It is not true. There are countries with governments but have not seen progress. In some countries the people have to sleep by the roadsides...there are no squatters even," he said.

Dr Mahathir said that there could never be a single Malaysian who had not benefited from the struggles of the Alliance previously and the Barisan Nasional now.

"If we were to say that we get nothing, it means that we are not grateful with what we have received," he said.

He cited as an example medical benefits provided to Malaysians when they were first born.

The prime minister said that the country could not be peaceful, stable and prosperous because it was difficult to rule Malaysia which was a federation with various races and 29 ethnic groups.

But, he said, what prevailed was the exact opposite because of the BN government which practised moderation and always strive to develop the country.

He said that the BN concept was special and unique because even the support of the minority was taken into account.

"I help you and you help me...that's the BN way," he said.

"PAS is now close to the DAP...to win votes. Kelantan Menteri Besar Kelantan Datuk Nik Aziz Nik Mat is now even prepared to cooperate with the devil to topple the BN government," he said.

He also criticised Nik Aziz for disallowing women from working, saying that it appeared as though women were to be isolated from nation-building.

The prime minister called on the BN component parties to forge closer cooperation.

He had also touched on the trials and tribulations of the government in developing the country before and after independence.

Among those present were Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamed Ali and Menteri Besar Tan Sri Sanusi Junid.

-- BERNAMA

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