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Mahathir-Sabah (Labuan)

DR MAHATHIR CLARIFIES ON LABUAN HANDOVER

KUDAT, March 11 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today criticised former Sabah Chief Minister Datuk Harris Salleh for twisting the facts concerning the handing over of Labuan island to the Federal government in 1984.

He referred to the opposition Parti Bersekutu, with Harris now its acting president, which had in its state election campaigning accused the Federal government of "seizing" Labuan.

"Who gave it away? I did not ask for it. He offered it...he wanted the Federal government to run Labuan," he said here today in campaigning for the Barisan Nasional (BN) candidates in the ninth state election set for tomorrow and on Saturday.

Dr Mahathir said Harris handed over Labuan to the Federal government so that when it is developed by using Federal government allocations, land prices on the island could rise and benefit the people.

"That was why Datuk Harris handed Labuan over to the Federal government. Now he is claiming the Federal government seized the island when in fact he gave it away on a silver platter," he said.

"Harris is playing on sentiments, he is trying to instigate the people in Sabah to turn against the Federal government. The Federal government did not take Labuan away from Sabah, Harris gave it away," he said to the applause of the more than 6,000 BN supporters.

The Prime Minister said the Parti Bersatu Sabah (PBS) led by Datuk Joseph Pairin Kitingan also played on racial sentiments on its call for Sabah to be governed only by Sabahans without involving the Federal government.

"He (Pairin) always made the Sabah for Sabahan call, Kadazan for Kadazan and bumiputera for bumiputera. This is not healthy and too narrow minded as if this is so, why must the Federal government help Sabah," he said.

He said the people in Sabah have wised up to the PBS tactic as no development was implemented when it was given the opportunity to govern the state, instead, the PBS leaders raked in instant profits by monopolising the timber revenue in the state.

"PBS wanted Sabah for itself because it could then take everything, all the timber is gone and we do not know where to, taxes are not paid, a lot of timber were sold but there was no money," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the PBS had resorted to spreading lies with its accusation that he (Dr Mahathir) had been given land in Keningau in its attempt to paint Federal leaders as greedy and to turn the people in Sabah against the Federal government.

Denying the allegation, Dr Mahathir said in jest that he only wanted a three feet by six feet land (burial plot).

-- BERNAMA

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