

14 MAY 1999

Mahathir-Ranau

DR MAHATHIR HAPPY TO HAVE MET RANAU FOLKS AT LAST

RANAU, May 14 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today he was happy to have finally met the people of this highland district after his visit here last month was called off due to inclement weather.

"It is indeed my wish for quite some time to come to this scenic Ranau but due to unavoidable circumstances I could not make it before," he said addressing a meet-the-people gathering at the community hall here today.

Dr Mahathir was originally scheduled to visit Ranau on the eve of the Sabah state election held on March 12 and 13 but his trip was cancelled at the last minute because weather conditions did not permit his helicopter flight here.

Although he could not make it in person then, Dr Mahathir addressed the people through telephone relayed live via radio broadcast.

Dr Mahathir, who arrived here on Royal Malaysia Air Force Nuri helicopter, thanked the people for the victory of Barisan Nasional (BN) candidate Datuk Siringan Gubat in the Ranau state seat.

" Believe me, the BN, as the government in Sabah and at the federal level, will not forget the support given by the Ranau people," he said to the thunderous applause of the 3,000 residents who accorded the prime minister a warm welcome.

Dr Mahathir, who recalled his visit to Ranau in 1965, said he found the situation now far better than before.

"As far as I can remember, there was no town here then and the road was dusty but now there are shops and beautiful houses. This is part of the fruits of development implemented by the government," he said.

The prime minister also promised to try to bring development to this district and to provide as much assistance to the residents here.

He also hoped that the people of Ranau would continue to preserve the prevailing harmony among them.

" Don't allow anyone to poison your minds to end this harmonious lifestyle," he said.

Meanwhile, several residents interviewed said they were happy that Dr Mahathir had kept his promise to visit the district.

Rasmin Saidan said Dr Mahathir's presence gave Ranau residents the courage to work harder.

His friend Maradan Kentoh said Ranau residents were anxiously waiting to meet Dr Mahathir personally and his visit today showed he was concerned about the people here.

Housewife Taat Lakim said she was impressed with the prime minister's speech, saying it could boost the people's love for the country.

-- BERNAMA

KHY/JS TS