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Mahathir-People

GOVT GIVES PRIORITY ATTENTION TO ALL

LAHAD DATU, Sept 17 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today the government gave priority attention to all groups of people irrespective of race, whether they were very poor or very rich.

He said the government also helped the rich because they contributed to the country's revenue through tax collection which would in turn be used to provide various facilities and programmes to uplift the living status of the poor.

"When we get money, we don't waste but help the people by carrying out the hardcore poor assistance programme, take care of the low-income group, give scholarships and so on," he said when opening an estate under the development programme for hardcore poor in Bagahak, about 60km from here.

While reminding the people to elect a government that could administer the country efficiently and provide opportunities to all regardless of race and religion, Dr Mahathir said only the present government could guarantee all these could be continued.

"Indeed, the Barisan Nasional (BN) wished to help the people. We have big ambitions to become a developed nation and we're confident of achieving the status as we are no way less than the others. What's needed is education opportunities, training and all these are made available by the BN government," he said.

In this context, Dr Mahathir urged the people not to make a mistake in electing the government in the coming general election.

He cited as example how the Sabah people made a mistake by electing Parti Bersatu Sabah (PBS) to rule the state from 1985 to 1994.

"I felt sad as after the BN took over the state administration, I found that the Kota Kinabalu town don't even have street lights. But when the BN formed the government, not only Kota Kinabalu, other towns and villages also enjoyed ample access to power supply," he told the 4,000 people from this district and from surrounding areas.

In fact, the BN had also drawn up a systematic programme to develop the poor as evident from the establishment of this estate under the hardcore poor development programme which was opened in Bagahak today.

"When Sabah was ruled by other parties, there was no such estates and no plans to help the poor. Instead the rich Sabah became poor because the vast timber resources have been exhausted but don't know where the money went," he said.

Dr Mahathir also reminded the people to support whoever the BN nominated as candidate irrespective from which component party they were as they were all BN candidates and must be supported by all.

"We do not take into account the race, we only vote for the scale. When you see the scale, vote for it, don't think anything else," said Dr Mahathir, who is also BN chairman.

He also said the ambition to transform Malaysia into a developed nation by the year 2020 was not a dream but something that could become a reality.

"What's important is that, we should know how to elect a government. If we opt for the wrong choice of government, it will be disastrous (for the country and people)," he said.

Kelantan, he said, had the most number of people living in abject poverty as compared to other states because they made a mistake by electing a party that did not give priority to the people's well-being.

"PAS was elected as it is said to be an Islamic party. PAS is not an

Islamic party but only used Islam to drum up support. I'm confident PAS will not come here as they will only spoil the people," he said.

Dr Mahathir also praised the state government for introducing the hardcore poor estate concept which would not only yield immense benefits to the poor but was planned in such a way that they could reap income in a short period.

"The land provided has already been planted with oil palm, no need to wait for four or five years. If they were to plant themselves, it will take time to harvest the oil palm fruits and at that time, it's not surprising if they want to sell the land to big companies," he said.

The estate covering 11,000 hectares was developed by Sawit Kinabalu Sdn Bhd, a state government-owned agency.

Part of the estate was allotted to 200 hardcore poor families with six hectares each.

-- BERNAMA

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