

10 MAR 1999

Mahathir-Sabah (Allocation)

NO EXTRA ALLOCATION TO OPPOSITION GOVT

KOTA KINABALU, March 10 (Bernama) -- The Federal government will only provide bigger allocations to a state if it is governed by a Barisan Nasional (BN) government, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said tonight.

The Federal government could not be generous to an opposition state government and it would only provide allocations according to what had been determined under the Constitution, he said.

"Datuk Harris Salleh (the acting Bersekutu president) said it is not right nor fair for the Federal government not to support a Sabah government that is from the opposition.

"That is his view... we will provide support to any government in Sabah up to the limit determined by the law. We will do what is required of us under the law. We do not have to go beyond what the law says," he said.

Speaking at a dinner hosted by the Penampang Chinese Chamber of Commerce and Industry here, Dr Mahathir said the Federal government could only support a state government which worked closely with the Federal government "and that state government must be from the BN".

"We are not being unfair... we are more fair than them (the opposition) but we cannot be generous to them. We can be generous to a BN government in Sabah and that I can promise," Dr Mahathir said.

He said Sabah needed bigger fund allocations because the Federal government had to rebuild Sabah after a period under the opposition.

"The previous governments including Parti Bersatu Sabah and Berjaya... they have chopped down all the wealth of Sabah. PBS, in particular, cut down more trees than you can think of. So there is no more wealth in Sabah," he said.

Urging the people to support the BN, the Prime Minister said both PBS and Bersekutu were not capable of developing Sabah.

"We know the PBS is not capable of running Sabah. It just wants to be in the position because their leaders want to enjoy power and get certain benefits. The same goes for Harris, who formed his party when there is an election, not because he wants to serve," he said.

Dr Mahathir spoke on the need for the people to give their full backing to the government to enable it to implement various recovery measures to overcome the economic downturn facing the nation.

Citing the recent success in stabilising the ringgit and in lowering interest rates which are conducive for business in the country, he said the government was able to do so as it has got the full support of the people.

"So you see, when you support the government, you strengthen the government and because it is strong, it can do things that is good for the people," he said.

He also expressed confidence that the Chinese community would give their full support to the BN in this weekend's Sabah state election as they could not afford to be ruled by the opposition.

"Tan Sri Bernard Dompok says he was in the opposition government before but he realised that the opposition could not develop Sabah as it could not get help from the Federal government.

"So he left PBS to join BN and now he is the Chief Minister and able to do things not only for his community but also for others," he said.

Dompok had earlier in his speech related his experience when assuming various portfolios under the then PBS government.

He told his audience of his difficulties in getting things done no matter how noble the intention might be.

Dr Mahathir also urged the people to support Dompok, who is the BN candidate for the Moyog state constituency, as he had shown in the BN that he is a leader who can be trusted.

"If the BN has no trust in Dompok, we would have held the state election when he is not yet the Chief Minister. That is how much we trusted this Kadazandusun leader in the person of Tan Sri Bernard Dompok.

"We need him... so I hope the Chinese will give him the support as a leader of the BN, a leader for all communities," he added.

-- BERNAMA

JS THG