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Mahathir-Cooperation

ONLY BN COOPERATION LASTING, SAYS MAHATHIR

RANAU, May 14 (Bernama) -- Prime Menteri Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said only the inter-racial cooperation as practised by the Barisan Nasional (BN) coalition is the lasting kind.

It was cooperation of this nature that has ensured equal treatment for all the communities in the country, said Dr Mahathir, who is also BN chairman.

"All the races are represented in the federal cabinet and in the state governments," he said addressing a meet-the-people gathering at the community hall here today.

In the BN, he said, no majority community tried to monopolise everything or oppress the minority group.

"This is how the BN takes up the cause of the all races and of all the religions," he said to the thunderous applause of the 3,000 Ranau residents who accorded the prime minister a warm welcome.

Dr Mahathir, who is on a two-day visit to Sabah, took time to be in this highland district to keep his date with the people which had to be deferred because inclement weather then did not permit his helicopter flight here.

He was originally scheduled to come here on the eve of the Sabah state election held last March 12 and 13.

Dr Mahathir said it was through such cooperation that the BN had repeatedly emerged victorious in general elections and was successful in developing the country.

He said this successful teamwork had prompted opposition parties to try to imitate such an alliance.

However, he said, the pact that PAS and the DAP tried to put up was only a temporary arrangement merely to secure a win in the general election.

Dr Mahathir said a prosperous and riot-free Malaysia would not suffice until there was full cooperation among the various races and ethnic groups in all fields.

"We can't afford to be fragmented. We must uphold effective co-existence through the BN," he said.

At the function, the prime minister reminded the audience not to have the notion that Sabah is separate from Malaysia.

"Keep in mind that Sabah is part of Malaysia. If Malaysia becomes impoverished because of economic problems, Sabah and rural areas like Ranau will not be spared as well," he said.

He said Malaysians should help the government ensure the success of industries and conglomerates because it could collect much taxes from them to finance national development, especially for the rural areas.

"For each RM1 profit that the companies make, 28 sen belong to the government," he said.

Dr Mahathir pledged to the people in Ranau that the government would develop the district and provide as much assistance as it could.

Dr Mahathir, who first visited Ranau together with the late Tun Abdul Razak Hussein (then deputy prime minister) in 1965, said he would send Implementation and Coordination (ICU) officers here to study ways to develop Ranau further.

In the state election last March, the BN candidate Datuk Siringan Gubat won the Ranau seat by a majority of 1,227 votes.

Earlier, Land and Cooperative Development Minister Tan Sri Kasitah Gaddam, who is also Kinabalu BN division chief, asked the government to develop Ranau's tourism potentials and make it a centre of excellence in education.

Scenic Ranau covers a 294,000 ha area straddling the foot of Mount Kinabalu, Southeast Asia's highest mountain.

Located 100 km from Kota Kinabalu, the state capital, Ranau has a population of 60,000.

Also present were the prime minister's wife Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali, Sabah Chief Minister Datuk Osu Sukam, Information Minister Datuk Mohamed Rahmat, Pahang Menteri Besar Tan Sri Khalil Yaacob and Umno Youth acting chief Datuk Hishammuddin Tun Hussein.

At the function Dr Mahathir received RM11,940 for the National Special Fund donated by teachers in the district.

-- BERNAMA

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