

28 JUN 1999

Mahathir-Kelantan

STATE GOVT'S ATTITUDE MAKES IT HARD TO ERADICATE POVERTY

CYBERJAYA, June 28 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today it is quite difficult for the federal authorities to eradicate poverty in Kelantan because the state government is asking people to be ungrateful to the federal government.

The glaring problem of poverty in Kelantan occurred because the state government did not give attention to it, the Prime Minister said when commenting on Utusan Malaysia's special report today on poverty in Kelantan.

The PAS-led state government had also failed to take any action, he told a news conference here after launching MSC Venture Corporation Sdn Bhd (MSCVC), the first venture-capital company to invest in the Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC).

"It's true they don't have money, but they should not have made promises to the people if they cannot afford," he said.

"We (federal government) can help, but the problem is when we help the opposition party is fond of saying that it's all right even if you don't support the BN. So what is the use of supporting (BN)?" he said.

"Even now, they are urging the people not to be thankful to those who help them.

"As such, we get disheartened to help," Dr Mahathir said.

Commenting on the resignation of Datuk Harris Salleh from Parti Bersekutu and his intention to stay away from politics, he said: "That is very good. I think he should concentrate on his plantations as he is very good in agriculture and forestry."

Asked on the former Sabah chief minister's movement in and out of politics, Dr Mahathir said the BN had always found him to be quite an erratic person.

"For that reason, BN could not cooperate with him because we don't know what he is going to do next," he said.

On the request by Cuepacs that housing loan interest for civil servants be reduced to three percent from four percent, he said the government would consider it if it could afford to reduce the rate.

"Of course, we are willing to help but our financial allocation becomes a problem," he said.

-- BERNAMA

AD AHH YBY