

10 NOV 2000

Mahathir-Lunas

BN LIKELY TO FIELD MIC CANDIDATE IN LUNAS- DR MAHATHIR

GURUN, Kedah, Nov 10 (Bernama) -- The Barisan Nasional is likely to field a candidate from the MIC for the Lunas state by-election, Prime Minister and BN Chairman Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

"It is likely that we will field a candidate from the MIC unless the party does not want the seat then we will give it to other BN parties," he said after opening a seminar on smart partnership in Kedah's development here.

He said discussions would be held with MIC President and Works Minister Datuk Seri S.Samy Vellu as soon as possible before the candidate was decided.

"We are ready, we are ready. Many are interested," he said when asked whether the BN was prepared for the by-election.

The seat fell vacant following the death of the Lunas assemblyman Dr Joe Fernandez who was Kedah Deputy MIC Chairman.

He was shot dead by unidentified gunmen at a road junction in Bukit Mertajama on Saturday.

Asked about his dissatisfaction over the degree of smart partnership between Federal and state governments particularly in the area of approving projects, the Prime Minister said, "We have worked out a new system which enables the state and Federal Governments to make faster decisions."

Dr Mahathir said his meeting with Chief Ministers and Menteri Besar in Putrajaya yesterday had established the need for closer cooperation between the state and central governments.

Turning to rivers, the Prime Minister urged the people to support government efforts to preserve and beautify rivers.

The people should develop the culture of safeguarding the rivers as they were the source of drinking water and water for other activities.

This morning Dr Mahathir launched the national level "Love the River" campaign in Ampang Jajar, Alor Setar.

Returning to the meeting of Menteri Besar and Chief Ministers, the Prime Minister said he wanted them to step up the implementation machinery at state level so that approval of projects could be speeded up.

They do not need any new machinery but only need upgrade their existing machinery, he said.

"It is vital for the government to have the machinery which can assess the progress of any project and take urgent measures to overcome any problem that crops up," he said during the seminar dialogue.

He said they should practise the concept of "hands on administration" by going down to the field to resolve problems.

"Menteri Besar, Chief Ministers and ministers should go down and see for themselves the problems which hinder the smooth implementation of development projects and resolve them," he said.

He said for instance the container congestion problem was resolved when the Transport Minister himself went to the port to study the matter and find ways of overcoming the congestion.

Opening the seminar, Dr Mahathir said there was a need for smart partnership between the state and centre to speed up the implementation of development projects.

Such partnership would reduce bureaucratic red tape hindering the implementation of projects.

The Prime Minister also said smart partnership between the government

and the private sector was vital so that the government could facilitate private sector's bid for profits and the government could later benefit from taxes.

"If the government helps the private sector gain more profit, we can collect more tax and eventually be able to pay civil servants salaries as well as bonus," he said.

The Prime Minister said the contention that while the private sector made profits, the salaries of government servants remained static was incorrect as it had close links to increase in profits and taxes for the government.

Hence civil servants should help speed up the approval of projects and not reject them merely because of some mistakes that could be rectified, Dr Mahathir said.

"Our duty is to ensure whatever they want to do, we facilitate their approval," he said.

The Government would only award projects to those who had the ability to implement them.

On the claim about cronyism in government-private sector smart partnership, Dr Mahathir said, "If projects are apportioned in a democratic way without considering abilities, the project will not take off and maybe people who get the project will sell it off as they do not have the ability to implement it."

"Smart partnership must take into consideration the ability (of the contractors) to implement projects," he said.

"I am the Inspector-General of Development as I myself go and see the implementation of projects," the Prime Minister said.

"Some get the project but after that they do not even go and see it," he added.

-- BERNAMA

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