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Policies helped prevent bankruptcies

Bakar; Elizabeth John; Sharanjit Singh; Nelson Fernandez
JITRA, Sun. - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today the Government had helped the Chinese business community by implementing economic recovery programmes so they would not go bankrupt.

The Prime Minister said he believed many Chinese businessmen would have gone bankrupt had the Government not helped them during the recession before the 1999 general election.

However, he was disappointed with the way certain groups had acted despite the Government's efforts to help the Chinese.

"Before the (last) general election, we helped the Chinese a lot. But this is what we get in return," he told reporters after visiting flood-hit areas and evacuation centres in the Kubang Pasu.

About 1,838 residents in the district were evacuated because of the floods.

Dr Mahathir was asked on reports that the Chinese education movement was supporting the Opposition in the Lunas State by-election, polling for which is on Wednesday.

He termed certain groups as extremists for continuing to harp on the Vision Schools issue.

He said these groups wanted to isolate the Chinese from other races and were taking advantage of the Lunas by-election to get what they wanted.

However, Dr Mahathir believed that the Chinese leaders would be able to address the issue.

"I think they (Chinese leaders) can tackle the issue, but there are some Chinese who want to take advantage of this."

He said the Chinese community should be grateful for the generosity of the Government in assisting many Chinese businessmen when times were bad.

On certain Chinese groups backing the Opposition, Dr Mahathir said it was not wrong for them to support the Opposition, but if they did, they should not expect the Government to fulfil their needs in the future.

"If they rally behind the Opposition, in future if they want anything, they should ask the Opposition, not us."

On the Opposition's claim that it was Umno which was responsible for the May 13 1969 tragedy, Dr Mahathir, who is also Umno president said: "How is that? It is they who are playing racial issue, not us."

"They select candidate based on race ... they do not want to select an Indian candidate because the Malays who support them will not support an Indian."

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