

Dr M: Peace vital for growth

STAR

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■ By MUGUNTAN VANAR and WONG YEONG TYAN

TENOM Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad urged Malaysians yesterday to set aside racial feelings and instead uphold unity and racial harmony.

The Prime Minister said the Barisan Nasional Government would do everything to maintain peace and harmony for development to continue at a more rapid pace.

We must not allow ourselves to be instigated by any quarters out to create chaos and racial misunderstanding, he said at a meet the people session in this interior town where a ground breaking ceremony for the 40km Tenom Beaufort road was held.

He said it was pointless for Malaysians to have misunderstandings because of differences in opinion or differences in race, religion and culture.

It is better to set aside extreme racial feelings and instead uphold unity in order to remain a peaceful country.

In other countries people of various races and religions cannot live in harmony and this brings about problems even to the extent of killings which does not benefit anybody, he said.

He said the Barisan Government was out to maintain peace and harmony which were key elements for development.

With peace and harmony, he said not much money needed to be spent on security and the money saved could be used to bring development to the people.

Citing the recent economic crisis when many people were affected, he said Malaysia managed to overcome it due to the peace and harmony in the country.

He said that the Barisan Government had promised to develop rural areas with many programmes and projects.

It will take time but we will keep our promise, he said to loud applause from the large crowd.

He said the Bakun dam project was an example of how the Government was willing to spend billions of ringgit for the benefit of the people, including the rural poor.

We will continue with the Bakun dam despite the criticism that this mega project is wasteful, said Dr Mahathir, adding that Bakun was a project to benefit the people of Sarawak, Sabah and Borneo.

He said Bakun would be viable for the people in this region as power generated through small power stations using other means such as diesel was not economical.

Dr Mahathir said although the construction cost of the Bakun dam would be high, the electricity generated would be cheaper, especially in Sabah where consumers pay high rates.

Stressing that a bulk of the allocation under the Eighth Malaysia Plan would be for rural development, he said priority would be given for water supply and infrastructure development.

We have to repay the people who voted for us by bringing development to them, he said.