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Mahathir-Kelantan

DR MAHATHIR LAMENTS KELANTAN'S BACKWARDNESS

TUMPAT, July 20 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today expressed his regret over Kelantan's backwardness with not much development compared to other states which have seen rapid growth since the country attained independence.

"There is no visible development and the people seem to be left behind," he told a media conference at the end of his one-day visit to Kelantan.

Accompanied by Kelantan Umno leaders, Dr Mahathir took a bus ride to have a closer look at the pace of development in Tumpat and Pasir Mas districts.

Dr Mahathir said from his observation, he found that Tumpat -- the district said to be the most developed in Kelantan in the 1950s -- had not developed at all and only had buildings and houses built about 50 years ago.

"I'm very sad. Actually, Kelantan with many calibre people around must be more developed than the other states," he said.

He attributed the current situation to the weaknesses of the PAS-led Kelantan government.

"It's because the state government is not efficient in bringing about development, the people in Kelantan are suffering," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the situation had been made worst with the Kelantanese having the opportunity to further their education to university level refusing to return to the state after completing their studies.

He said these Kelantan-born graduates, who could use their knowledge and expertise to develop the state, instead feel comfortable staying in Kuala Lumpur or in other big towns.

Asked whether the federal government would help to generate growth in Kelantan, including approving financial allocation sought by the state government, Dr Mahathir said it was difficult to fulfil as PAS leaders were fond of making slanders.

"We want to help but if they continue to condemn us, how to help. They call me dog, devil, biggest devil, is it fair.

"After that, they ask us for help, how to help. Which devil will help human beings. If I am a devil, I cannot help human beings," he said.

Earlier, when addressing about 5,000 people at Pengkalan Kubor here, Dr Mahathir called on the Kelantan people to evaluate the backwardness of the state due to the PAS government's failures.

"Kelantan's future is in the hands of the Kelantan people. After this, elect an efficient government that is capable of developing Kelantan, a state government that enjoys close rapport with the federal government so that a lot of assistance can be tapped from the federal government," he said.

Dr Mahathir said Kelantan could actually be proud as many Kelantanese had become successful entrepreneurs and held high positions in the federal government and leading companies.

Unfortunately, these people are not keen to return to Kelantan and to develop their own state, he said.

"I believe if the situation is conducive, they will return to the state," he said.

In RANTAU PANJANG, Dr Mahathir, who is also Umno president, held a closed-door meeting with Rantau Panjang and Tumpat Umno division leaders at

Sekolah Kebangsaan Gual Tinggi.

Present was Kelantan Umno liaison chief Datuk Mustapa Mohamed.

Dr Mahathir later made a brief visit to the Rantau Panjang town, a popular shopping spot at the Malaysia-Thailand border, and mingled with the locals.

-- BERNAMA

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