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Mahathir-Administration

GOV'T WILL STREAMLINE ADMINISTRATION TO PREVENT PROBLEMS

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 29 (Bernama) -- The government's administrative system must be reviewed to prevent problems like delays in implementing development projects and encroachment on Malay reserve and government land, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

"We must review the administrative system. It's the reason why sometimes the allocations we give are not spent. It's not because (we) don't want to spend but the procedures take such a long time. Sometimes it takes a year just to acquire the land," the prime minister said.

Speaking at a news conference after opening the International Water Association (IWA) Conference on Water and Waste Management for Developing Countries here, he also said that problems relating to the Hardcore Poor Development Programme were not something new.

He said the government had to depend on certain people like government officers and elected representatives to report on who were eligible for aid under the programme.

"Sometimes, these people may practise some favouritism. So those who should not, get (the aid), while those who should, don't get and the government gets blamed," he said.

Problems relating to the programme are a hot topic of discussion these days and Rural Development Minister Datuk Azmi Khalid recently spoke about cheating cases involving investments worth RM47 million in projects under the programme.

Asked about reports on encroachment on Malay reserve land in Selangor by foreigners, Dr Mahathir said it was difficult to detect such cases.

This was because nobody seemed to know which officers were in charge and those in charge had kept quiet under the assumption that the development in question had obtained approval.

"So it is not always corruption. People talk about corruption, but sometimes these things grow just like that," he said.

Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Dr Rais Yatim was recently reported as saying that the encroachment problem was the result of abuse of power and corruption on the part of the enforcers.

Dr Mahathir said allegations of this nature must be accompanied by proof.

"We cannot just go up to a person (and say) 'Look, something is wrong, you must have taken money'. I mean if you go to the court, the court will throw it out. We have to have proof. People must be ready to come up and give evidence. But we cannot get proof. That is our problem," he said.

On calls for incompetent ministers to be dropped from the cabinet, Dr Mahathir said: "Yes, we can drop all of them. We can also drop elected representatives who don't attend (the Dewan Rakyat). If we throw stones, we must make sure that they do not hit us back later. If we live in a glass house and we throw stones, everything will be broken."

The prime minister was also asked to comment on press reports today that the Terengganu government was continuing to destroy permanent forest reserves, including 4,000ha in Dungun, to get timber.

He said: "That's the problem. When we have a state government with power over such matters, they're not responsible, they're more interested in revenue."

Dr Mahathir said the government had determined the number of trees that could be felled in specific areas but some parties were felling all the

trees in these area.

-- BERNAMA

MAM AHH JK