

15 JUL 2002

Mahathir-Poverty

BN GOVT DEVELOPMENT POLICY HAS REDUCED POVERTY RATE

PENDANG, July 15 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has said the Barisan Nasional Government's development policy has reduced the poverty rate in the country.

He said at one time 80 per cent of the population was poor but after 44 years of independence this had been reduced to just seven per cent of the population.

He said the government had never forgotten the poor as it had drawn up various programmes to help them such as the Development Programme for the Hardcore Poor under which houses had been built so that they could live comfortably like others.

"The BN policy is to create a balance between the poor and the rich," he said when launching the Kedah level Farmers, Fishermen and Livestock Breeders Day here.

Among the dignitaries present were Kedah Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Syed Razak Syed Zain, Defence Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak, Information Minister Tan Sri Khalil Yaacob, Agriculture Minister Datuk Mohd Effendi Norwawi and the Barisan Nasional candidate for the Pendang Parliamentary seat Datuk Othman Abdul.

Dr Mahathir said the fate of the poor was always in the mind of the Barisan Nasional Government which was always striving to improve their lot.

Aware that many farmers, livestock breeders and fishermen were still poor, the BN Government was always making efforts to help them, he said.

"But PAS preferred to see many people remain poor for then it can incite them and claim that the government has not done anything for them," he said.

He said despite the opposition's attempts to belittle its efforts, the government would continue with such efforts to help the poor so that they would not remain in the clutches of poverty.

"Farmers have been able to undertake double cropping of padi through the government's irrigation programme and this had increased their income and made them more comfortable. The Government has also provided them with fertilizer subsidy, increased padi prices and now we are planning fish rearing in canals of the Muda Agriculture Development Authority (Mada)," he said.

The Prime Minister said when the government wanted to implement the Mada project before, PAS went round claiming it was a mad project which would not be successful.

They questioned the wisdom of double cropping within one year and ridiculed it by saying that the land would cry as it had no rest and claimed that the clothes of the farmers would also not have enough time to dry.

"That is the PAS way of ensuring that farmers remain poor for if they remain poor then they will be angry with the government and so will support PAS, that is the PAS aim, not to bring progress to the farmers," he said.

"In the past there were only gravel roads here but all have been tarred now even up to the doorstep and the houses have been supplied with electricity and telephone facilities," he said.

Dr Mahathir said if the farmers in Kelantan, ruled by PAS, were able to double crop, it was because of the irrigation project implemented by the Barisan Nasional Government.

"Since PAS came to power in Kelantan how much padi and rice had come

from the state? There are even no employment opportunities there."

The Prime Minister said the successful development projects in this country had attracted the interest of foreign leaders who were eager to find out how a poor country depending on rubber and tin exports was able to develop and be on par with developed countries.

Dr Mahathir urged PAS supporters to reject the feelings of hatred towards the government and Umno, perpetrated by the opposition.

"PAS members should repent and return to the correct path, return to the path of Islam, reject the feelings of hatred sowed by your leaders as your leaders have strayed far from the teachings of Islam for the purpose of getting votes," he said.

-- BERNAMA

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