

11 OCT 2002
Mahathir-Sabah
DEVELOPMENT IN SABAH TO BE SPEEDED UP, SAYS PM

By: Azman Ujang

PUTRAJAYA, Oct 11 (Bernama) -- The federal government will speed up the economic development in Sabah as there is political stability following the return of Parti Bersatu Sabah (PBS) to the Barisan Nasional (BN), Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

The re-entry of PBS into the BN was something good because the party realised the importance of all parties uniting to give equitable treatment to the people of Sabah, the Prime Minister said in an interview at his office here on the eve of the Gaya parliamentary by-election in Sabah.

"Of course we give focus on Sabah which during the time it was under opposition (PBS) rule previously did not get enough attention or allocation for development. We need to speed up the development process in Sabah," he said.

"PBS also realises that nothing can be done if it becomes an opposition party," he said of the party which once ruled Sabah for nine years and which left the BN in 1990. It was accepted back into the coalition last January.

Dr Mahathir said the support of the Sabah people for BN had become very strong now.

"Generally, wherever I go to in Sabah, the people are so friendly, unlike previously when they seemed not too comfortable with the BN. Now it is clear that the Sabah people give solid support to the BN," said Dr Mahathir, who is also the BN chairman.

On the by-election, the Prime Minister reminded the voters in Gaya that the opposition parties contesting in the by-election were not capable of doing anything for their benefit.

"Firstly, this is a by-election, not one to determine who forms the government. This means that if there are promises made by opposition parties, there is nothing that they can do. Their promises are empty promises, because they are not able (to fulfil them); the government is the one which can do it.

"The government is the one which determines whether something can be done or not. So I hope the voters in Gaya will not be deceived by the promises made by the opposition parties. If they make a wrong choice, they will ultimately be the victims," he said.

The by-election is a three-cornered fight between BN's Liew Teck Chan, 54, DAP's Hiew King Cheu, 50, and Keadilan's Christina Liew, 50.

Dr Mahathir urged the 49,427 registered voters in Gaya to come out in full force tomorrow to vote although it is just a by-election.

"Although this is a by-election, we value support for the BN. It doesn't mean that just because BN will win we are not concerned about the majority vote for BN. The (winning) majority is a measure of the people's support for the BN and this also means support for the state government and federal government."

With this, it would be easy for the government to look into the demands or grouses of the voters in Gaya, he said.

"This is my hope; I hope the voters and BN workers will not take lightly their duty as a responsible race by coming out in big numbers to vote BN for our common good," he said.

In reply to a question, Dr Mahathir also spoke of the success of national integration as there are now several people from Sabah and Sarawak holding some of the highest posts in government service.

They are Attorney-General Datuk Abdul Gani Patail from Sabah, and Director-General of Health Tan Sri Dr Mohd Taha Ariff and Deputy Inspector-General of Police Tan Sri Jamil Johari, both from Sarawak.

"It is immaterial where they are from. We only judge them on their capability. When there are capable people from Sarawak and Sabah, we give them proper treatment by placing them in posts they deserve," he said.

-- BERNAMA

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