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'No progress under poor leaders'

reports on "Anak Bukit and Pendang by-elections" by Ainon Mohd;
PENDANG, Tues. - A country with rich natural resources will be of no benefit to the people if the leadership does not have the knowledge to exploit them.

Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said there were many countries whose climate and natural resources were similar to Malaysia, but were still under-developed and poor.

"If the leadership did not have the necessary know-how, planning and vision to develop a nation, then the country would never be able to progress no matter how rich its resources are," he said after laying the foundation stone for the new Pendang District and Land offices today.

Also present were Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Syed Razak Syed Zain, Housing and Local Government Minister Datuk Seri Ong Ka Ting and Barisan Nasional candidate for Pendang, Datuk Othman Abdul.

He said the people here were fortunate that under the BN leadership headed by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, the country had seen rapid progress and the poverty level had dropped drastically.

"Despite rapid development, the Government is still working to bring more development, especially to the rural areas."

He said administering a country was a mammoth task as the Government must ensure development reached each and every citizen in the country.

"We have to come up with different kinds of development to suit people of various walks of life here.

"For rural areas, we know what the people need and therefore place greater emphasis on new ways to improve their agricultural produce and also look into ways to improve the health standards there."

To ensure the needs of everyone were being cared for, he said a detailed administrative structure was needed.

"That is why we have district offices and even Village Committees to act as a channel between the people and the leadership," he said.

At a function later in Kg Paya Mak Insun, Abdullah said the voters should not be easily influenced by Pas which claimed that they too could administer the country well if they were given half the chance to do so.

He said unlike Pas, the BN government has come up with policies meant to look after the interests and needs of the people as well as for the nation to progress.

"In many instances, the policies have been proven to be beneficial not only to the people but the nation as well.

"A country can only develop and progress rapidly if its leaders are credible and have the vision to bring the country forward."

The government, he added, did not neglect those in the rural areas.

Abdullah said the government would conduct by-elections immediately after the death of a state assemblyman or member of parliament so that the people in the constituency were not neglected.