

16 JAN 2003

Mahathir-Love

LOVE MALAYSIA, THE LAND OF YOUR BIRTH - DR M

JELI, Jan 16 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today expressed the hope that Malaysians will continue to love Malaysia and place the country's interests above their own.

The Prime Minister said the country had contributed greatly to the prosperity and well-being of millions of multi-racial Malaysians.

"Love Malaysia, the country where we were born, grew up and where we will die," he said when speaking at a leader-with-the-people gathering at Sekolah Kebangsaan Ayer Lanas, here.

Dr Mahathir is in Kelantan since yesterday for a two-day working visit to meet the people and State Barisan Nasional (BN) leaders.

To maintain what is being enjoyed by the people in the country, he said, they should be grateful and ensure that the next government would also rule wisely and efficiently.

He said imbued with that spirit, the BN leaders were able to struggle for the people's interests.

Contrary to opposition claims, he said, the BN Government not only struggled for the people's material interest but also assured their spiritual well-being.

Hence, he urged the people to continue supporting Umno and the BN even after his retirement in October.

"I hope after my retirement, the people will continue to give their support to my successor Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and Abdullah's successor.

"I will ensure a smooth leadership transition to ensure a stable government," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the BN Government was not greedy for power.

"We know when we should bow out. When one is already 77, he has to go, what else is there.

Dr Mahathir said the people had the responsibility to elect an efficient government and not to be influenced by the slanders of certain groups or make decisions driven by anger which would ruin the country's future.

"We must be clever in electing a government. Don't be driven by desires, we elect a government for our own good," he said.

He said the BN Government had proven its capabilities as many of the poor had received assistance.

"...even the very poor to the extent of not able to send their children to school, we are prepared to give RM120 a year.

"The amount is not much but if you take into account the number of students in need of the assistance, the allocation runs into hundreds of millions of ringgit," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the government's efficient administration had enabled tax to be collected only from groups earning bigger incomes.

Of the 24 million people in Malaysia, only one million paid income tax, said Dr Mahathir, who is also Finance Minister.

"This is our way not to burden the poor and medium-income earners. We collect taxes from the rich to be distributed to the poor. In this way, the poor can enjoy the country's wealth," he said.

Dr Mahathir also said he did not want the people to think that as long as there is a government, the country can be developed because there are countries with governments that cannot develop the country.

"I apologise for giving an example that may not go down well with the people in Kelantan, I apologise first. We find that many Kelantanese migrate to Kuala Lumpur and Singapore to look for jobs and to do business.

"They move out because the situation in Kelantan is not favourable for them to either earn more or to earn a decent income to sustain their living," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the situation arose because the state government failed to administer the state efficiently and could not create jobs, prompting many Kelantanese to leave the state.

He said Kelantanese are clever, hardworking, efficient and can do business but if the state is not administered well, the clever and efficient people would have to migrate to other places.

-- BERNAMA

TEAM RAR TS