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`Elect the qualified to run Government'

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JELI, Thurs. - Qualified people should be elected to run the Government because they can ensure an effective administration for the benefit of the people, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

He said the people would stand to lose if they made a wrong choice and picked an inefficient Government.

"The people must bear in mind that if they want a job done, they must choose those who are really qualified. For example, if you want to undergo a heart surgery, you go to a qualified doctor. If you go to unqualified people, you will be doomed," he said.

He said people had to pick the Government wisely and not be influenced by instigation.

Dr Mahathir said they must not allow their feelings to influence their choices.

"An efficient Government is needed because we have to develop the country so that the people will become prosperous, and outsiders will look at Malaysians as being on par with the others," he said.

Speaking at a meet-the-people session at Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Air Lanas, he said only an efficient Government could bring the country to greater heights.

"We can do a lot of things because the Government is capable and competent," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the Federal Government had been able to help deserving cases due to its efficiency in creating a conducive business climate.

"Business is thriving and we can collect taxes from them," he said.

"We set aside a section of the money to help poor people so that they, too, can enjoy the fruits of development."

At the function, Dr Mahathir presented cash assistance to the family of six people mauled by tigers and another who survived such an attack.

He also presented RM120 to 20 poor students, who were among 87,339 recipients of financial assistance from the State.

On the Pas-led Kelantan Government, he said the State Government had failed to enrich the people, and create jobs and business opportunities.

"The situation in Kelantan does not permit the people to earn a living or improve their livelihood, resulting in many of them migrating to Singapore and other States to get jobs."

He said Kelantan people were hardworking, brilliant and had good business acumen but they were prevented from making full use of their talents in their home State.

"During the 1997 economic down-turn, the Pas-led State Government did not do anything. It did not come up with any plan to protect the ringgit. If they were the Federal Government in 1997, the country could have been colonised," he said.

On when leaders should make way for new blood, Dr Mahathir said every leader should be ready to step down when the time came to make way for others.

"We are not greedy for power. We know when we have to step down, we step down. If we can still serve, we serve. That is why when people reach 77, they step down. They should not wait ... even before reaching 77. Accept the fact that we have to make way for others so that they, too, can serve the people," he said.

"People may stop addressing them as Yang Berhormat. Instead it's Yang

Berbahagia. Why are we so concerned (with the titles) YB, YAB? Yang Amat Berbahagia should be okay.

"If they are after big cars, they need not be a wakil rakyat to buy cars with round headlights (Mercedes Benz). So, there is no need for it. I myself want to step down," he said.

Dr Mahathir expressed his hope the people would support his successor Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and also Abdullah's successor.