

04 FEB 2002

Rashid-Mahathir

FORMER CPM STRONGMAN PRAISES DR MAHATHIR'S LEADERSHIP

By: Adenan Jahaya

YALA (South Thailand), Feb 4 (Bernama) -- Former Communist Party of Malaya (CPM) strongman Rashid Maidin has heaped praises on the leadership of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad who has brought a lot of development to Malaysia, some of it which he describes as beyond expectations.

Rashid, 85, who stays in a village not far from here, said from what he heard and read through the media, Malaysia has leapt from one success to another under the brilliant stewardship of Dr Mahathir.

This includes producing its own national cars, something never dreamt of during the colonial days, Rashid told Malaysian journalists who visited his house in Kampung Chulaporn, Yaha, 60km from here yesterday.

"If not him (Dr Mahathir), then who else?"

"You (journalists) tell me. Other parties other Datuks (leaders), what have they done?"

Rashid, the former commander of CPM's 10th Regiment, said he sees a sincere leader in Dr Mahathir.

"This is clear, who is sincere for the mother land. Do not think that these success just cropped out on their own," said Rashid who lives in the remote village with his wife Salamah Abdullah, 73, over the past 10 years.

Rashid said he is thankful for the peace he enjoys now despite not staying in his own country.

"I am thankful for the government for helping my former men to resettle in Malaysia. Last time they are my men," said Rashid who reads the Berita Harian everyday.

Asked on why he prefers to stay in Thailand, Rashid said he is willing to return to Malaysia if he is offered better monetary incentives and other facilities.

So far, Rashid said he is contented with the 540 baht (RM50) a month he

receives from the Thai government apart from the land and livestock.

Rashid who is also the Kampung Chulaporn head hopes that the terrorist image still being labelled against former CPM leaders and members be discarded.

"Give us something (rights), we have been labelled terrorists for tens of years," said Rashid who performed the Haj pilgrimage with his wife two years ago.

Rashid, who last visited his family in Gopeng, Perak two years ago, said despite staying in Thailand, he follows current developments in Malaysia through the media.

From Malaysian newspapers which he buys in Yala daily, Rashid said he is disturbed over news on some issues in the country.

Rashid said he is bored by the many allegations thrown by certain parties in the country and feels uneasy when reading these claims and allegations.

Asked on the militant activities of the Kumpulan Militan Malaysia (KMM) and Al Maunah, Rashid said these groups can retard the country's growth and development.

"This (violence), where does it leads to," said Rashid, who is leading the kampung folks in building a mosque in the village.

He said the mosque is 70 per cent completed and hopes to finish its construction with assistance from public contributions.

Among those who visited the village, which has 100-odd dwellers comprising former CPM members and their families, are Perlis Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Shahidan Kassim and former Satun Province kadi Datuk Mara Noh.

-- BERNAMA
AD MFJ MAI ZUL