

Dr M: Don't use BR1M to be popular

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After panning the debt-ridden 1Malaysia Development Bhd (1MDB), Dr Mahathir Mohamad has now criticised Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak's Bantuan Rakyat 1Malaysia (BR1M).

In a blog posting, the former premier reminded the government that its money is derived from taxes.

"Taxes raise the cost of living. Still the people are willing to endure the raised cost of living because they expect the government to give them security, to govern the country well, to have policies which benefit the people.

"But the people would not like to see the taxes they pay to be expended in ways that are beyond this.

"Certainly they would not want their hard-earned money to be expended on winning popularity for anyone or political parties or administrations," he added.

Looks similar to bribery and vote-buying

Mahathir said monetary handouts on a large scale such as BR1M look similar to bribery.

"And when this is given near elections or the manifesto promises this, the impression that it is about buying votes just cannot be dismissed.

"If incomes are to be increased, it should be by way of creating opportunities for work or business," he added.

Furthermore, he said such handouts also increase personal dependence on the government even for one's income, without any effort by oneself.

"It weakens the character of people and reduces their competitiveness in the market place," he added.

High income, Mahathir said, should come from increases in productivity.

"Without increasing productivity, competitiveness would not improve. And the economy would not really grow. These countries invariably depend on foreign workers, executives and entrepreneurs," he added.

Socialists and Communists tried the same

Mahathir also said it was misleading to think that Malaysian can become a developed nation by 2020 by increasing average incomes to a certain level.

"A few people with very high incomes would distort the average income. Per capita income should not be a measure of our achievement of developed country status.

"The emphasis on high income alone is not enough. In fact by itself it will not make the country a developed country. It would be even more misleading when the income is due to handouts by the government," he argued.

To be developed, the former premier said, the nation must be at par with developed countries in terms of education, technological and industrial knowhow, research and development, industrialised to a high level, commensurate infrastructure and high earned incomes for all.

"It is imperative therefore to spend money on education and training to a higher level, to build up engineering and industrial capacities, to be productive and competitive, to expend money on building first-class infrastructure and to be researchers, inventors and developers.

"Since we want to be developed in our own mould, we can reject the moral values of some developed countries.

"We see them obviously decaying because of the emphasis on unlimited materialism and personal freedom.

"We must sustain the good values that we have and acquire good ethnics which will contribute to our productivity and our income. In other words we must earn our income through higher productivity and not through handouts by the government," he added.

Mahathir said the Socialists and Communists tried to improve their people's incomes by giving them money and making free availability of support facilities to ensure they have a good life.

"But Socialism and Communism have failed. They have to resort to free enterprise and hard work," he added.