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Oops! Dr Mahathir and oil royalties

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TUN Dr Mahathir Mohamad was playing to the gallery when he told a small rally in Kota Baru on Friday night that he would pay oil royalty to Kelantan should Barisan Nasional lose power.

"If we win, then we can give the royalties," he said, speaking to a 5,000-strong crowd at a ceramah organised by former Kota Baru MP Datuk Zaid Ibrahim and featuring Kelantan Parti Amanah Negara (PAN) adviser Datuk Husam Musa. Dr Mahathir is chairman of the new PPBM, an Umno splinter party.

Well, this is coming from the former prime minister, who once denied Kelantan oil royalty when he was in power, and who said recently that anyone who "bribes" voters or entices them with a reward is akin to feeding them "*dedak*" (livestock feed).

This is the same man, who in 1990, cancelled the RM600 million water development funds for Kelantan when Pas took over the state that year. Pas has been ruling the state since then. For the record, Putrajaya last month signed an agreement to pump in money to develop and manage Kelantan's water resources.

Husam, a former Pas leader and ex-Kelantan exco member who has joined PAN to campaign against Pas, had in 2011 accused Dr Mahathir of betraying the Malays.

He cited the example of the Federal Government's decision under Dr Mahathir to land natural gas from Kelantan waters in the southern Thai province of Songkhla instead of Kelantan. And many years later, Dr Mahathir and Husam shared the same stage.

Dr Mahathir also did the same thing in Terengganu when Pas took over power in the oil- and gas-rich state in November 1999. Three months later, he cancelled the state's oil royalty which the state was entitled to.

Dr Mahathir has been criss-crossing the country in his fight against BN. But his PPBM is still struggling to elect its central committee members.