

More focus to develop Sarawak, Sabah: Tun M

> Shared Prosperity Vision policy to see fair and equal distribution of wealth

KUCHING: Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad has said more focus should be given to develop Sarawak and Sabah.

In his Malaysia Day speech at Stadium Perpaduan in Kuching yesterday, the prime minister said more focus should be given, not just to Sarawak or Sabah based on favouritism, but to both.

He gave his commitment in line with the federal government's newly-introduced Shared Prosperity Vision policy that will see fair and equal distribution of wealth and shared development, Bernama reported yesterday.

Mahathir said the people in both states should be treated the same as those in the Peninsular and acknowledged that previously, both states had not been paid enough attention

(compared to the states in the Peninsular), and that the previous government had not given its fullest attention to Sarawak.

"If we are to compare, we are looking at an oil-rich Sarawak but yet development in the state is not equally distributed among Sarawakians and also between Sarawak and the Peninsular.

"The reality is that although Sarawak is much larger than other states in the Peninsular, development there is lagging, except in urban areas. In rural areas, we find the situation is not what we desire," he said.

On the Shared Prosperity Vision policy, Mahathir said implementation will differ from other policies introduced before.

"This time, we want to ensure the underprivileged are given opportunities, on

condition that they work hard and fully use these opportunities, are honest and not just sell their licences and contracts," he added.

Mahathir said for those lacking skills, the situation can be rectified via training in financial management and business management.

"We have (an) outline and understand how the shared prosperity policy can be achieved. The government is doing its duty to work for the people but the people must be ready to embrace this new policy for it to be a success," he said.

Speaking later at a "Berambek Bersatu Sarawak" programme, Mahathir said it was important for Sarawak to have a strong alliance with the federal government.

"What is extraordinary about Sarawak is that it is not of the same party as the government at federal level, so it is inevitable that the connection is not strong as we would like it to be.

"If the people want a strong connection between the state and federal governments, it is important to change the government in the next state election," he added.