

## **PM assures equal status will be returned to Sabah, Sarawak**

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KOTA KINABALU, Sept 16 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad today assured that the Pakatan Harapan government of the New Malaysia would return equal status to Sabah and Sarawak as enshrined in the Malaysia Agreement 1963 (MA63) when Malaysia was formed 55 years ago.

He said that the status of Sabah and Sarawak, which changed from equal partners (with Malaya) to states within the federation (of Malaysia), would be reverted to the original position once a study on MA63 was completed.

“Reverting the status of Sabah and Sarawak as per MA63 gives a solid foundation to strengthen ties between the three regions (Peninsular Malaysia, Sabah and Sarawak).

“Obviously Sabah and Sarawak’s development needs must be given attention because there are still districts that are backward and lacking in facilities.

“The study on MA63 will certainly raise the need for a review of several practices that were implemented before this,” he said at the national-level 2018 Malaysia Day celebration here tonight.

Also present at the event attended by more than 30,000 people were Sabah Yang Dipertua Negeri Tun Dr Juhar Mahiruddin and wife Toh Puan Norlidah RM Jasni, the prime minister’s wife Tun Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail, Sabah Chief Minister Datuk Seri Mohd Shafie Apdal, Sarawak Deputy Chief Minister Datuk Seri Douglas Uggah Embas, Communication and Multimedia Minister Gobind Singh Deo, who is also the chairman of the main organising committee,

However, Dr Mahathir said whatever review was done on the practices under MA63 must be done in the team spirit, mutual respect and with much give and take.

He said that without these attributes, the unity of Malaysia as one nation and one people would be eroded, apart from its beauty, which has been enjoyed all this while, would be lost in future.

He said that as for the Pakatan Harapan federal government, it would certainly not forget its responsibility to Sabah and Sarawak to find ways to improve infrastructure which would be carried out according to the requests and the needs of the people in the two states.

“At the same time, I am confident, the people-to-people ties which have been forged for so long will make us aware of the need for the spirit of reciprocity between Peninsular Malaysia, Sabah and Sarawak.

“Based on this spirit, the leaders and people of Sabah and Sarawak would also be aware that there are also states in Peninsular Malaysia that are lagging behind and need continued help from the government,” he said.

Dr Mahathir said that he was confident that the people of Sabah and Sarawak feel comfortable and accepted in the peninsula because their presence there is not subject to any encumbrances.

He said that he believed the situation had brought together the people of Sabah, Sarawak and Peninsular Malaysia as Malaysians.

“This closeness has helped Malaysia to stay strong even though there were times when there were differences of opinions among the leaders of the three regions,” he added.

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