

PARLIAMENT - MAHATHIR
BM

KUALALUMPUR, MARCH 19 (BERNAMA) -- THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT WILL ENDEAVOUR TO STRENGTHEN THE ROLE OF PULAU LABUAN AS A FREE PORT AND ENTREPORT CENTRE FOR ASEAN WHEN IT BECOMES FEDERAL TERRITORY, DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR MOHAMAD SAID.

THE PRIME MINISTER TOLD THE DEWAN RAKYAT THAT THIS WOULD SPEED UP ITS DEVELOPMENT FOLLOWING THE CHANGE IN ITS ECONOMIC STRUCTURE WHICH WOULD GENERATE JOB OPPORTUNITIES IN PRODUCTIVE ACTIVITIES.

ALL THIS WOULD BENEFIT THE PEOPLE OF MALAYSIA, IN PARTICULAR THOSE IN THE TERRITORY, HE SAID WHEN TABLING THE CONSTITUTION (AMENDMENT) (NO.2) BILL 1984 ON THE SETTING UP OF LABUAN FEDERAL TERRITORY.

HE SAID A COMMITTEE AT OFFICIAL LEVEL HEADED BY THE CHIEF SECRETARY TO THE GOVERNMENT HAD BEEN SET UP TO CO-ORDINATE ALL ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS TO ENSURE THAT NO PROBLEMS WOULD ARISE.

THE COMMITTEE WAS ALSO CO-ORDINATING EFFORTS TO ENSURE THAT SABAH GOVERNMENT OFFICERS AND STAFF IN LABUAN WOULD BE ABLE TO CONTINUE TO CONTRIBUTE THEIR SERVICES WHEN LABUAN BECAME FEDERAL TERRITORY? HE ADDED. -- MORE 1815/MB
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DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR SAID THE FEDERALIZATION OF LABUAN WOULD BRING ABOUT CLOSER RELATIONS BETWEEN THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT AND THE GOVERNMENTS OF SABAH AND SARAWAK AS WELL AS SPEED UP THE PROCESS OF NATIONAL INTEGRATION.

HE SAID THE HANDING OVER OF LABUAN TO THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT WOULD NOT INVOLVE ANY PAYMENT OF COMPENSATION TO THE SABAW GOVERNMENT.

WHAT WAS ASKED BY THE STATE GOVERNMENT WAS THAT THE +SRILABUAN+ BUILDING ON THE ISLAND -- WHICH WOULD SERVE AS THE STATE GOVERNMENT REST HOUSE -- AND THE SITE OF THE BUILDING REMAINED STATE PROPERTY AND THIS WAS AGREED TO, HE ADDED.

THE PRIME MINISTER SAID THAT THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT WOULD CONTINUE WITH THE DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS BEING CARRIED OUT BY THE STATE GOVERNMENT IN LABUAN AND IMPROVE ITS INFRASTRUCTURAL FACILITIES.

THE GOVERNMENT WOULD TAKE STEPS TO ENSURE THAT THE TRANSFER OF AUTHORITY AND JURISDICTION WOULD NOT CAUSE ANY DISRUPTION TO THE ISLAND'S DAILY ADMINISTRATION OR CREATE ANY DIFFICULTY FOR THE RESIDENTS, HE SAID. -- MORE 1820/MB

HE SAID THERE WERE PROVISIONS IN THE BILL TO ENSURE THAT SUCH PROBLEMS DID NOT ARISE.

AMONG OTHER THINGS, THE BILL PROVIDED THAT:

+LAW IN EFFECT ON THE ISLAND EXCEPT THE STATE CONSTITUTION, WOULD CONTINUE TO BE IN FORCE AFTER IT BECAME FEDERAL TERRITORY UNTIL THE LAWS APPROVED BY PARLIAMENT WERE EFFECTIVE;

+THE ADMINISTRATION OF LABUAN ISLAND WOULD BE CONTINUED AS A MUNICIPALITY AND ALSO AS A FREE PORT;

+THE USE OF PRIBUMI LANGUAGE IN NATIVE COURTS WOULD BE CONTINUED AND THE RIGHT OF THE ORIGINAL RESIDENTS OF LABUAN TO ENTER SABAH AND THEIR RIGHT TO BE RESIDENT IN THE STATE WOULD BE MAINTAINED.

DAYUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR SAID THAT A MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT OR A STATE ASSEMBLYMAN WHOSE CONSTITUENCY COVERED LABUAN ISLAND WOULD MAINTAIN THEIR SEATS AFTER THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE FEDERAL TERRITORY UNTIL PARLIAMENT OR THE STATE ASSEMBLY WAS DISSOLVED.
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HE SAID THE ELECTION CONSTITUENCY DELINEATION EXERCISE BEING CARRIED OUT WOULD PROVIDE FOR THE CREATION OF A CONSTITUENCY FOR LABUAN THAT WOULD NOT AFFECT THE NUMBER OF SABAH'S PARLIAMENTARY SEATS.

PROVISIONS WOULD ALSO BE MADE TO ENSURE THAT THE NUMBER OF STATE SEATS REMAINED UNCHANGED.

REGARDING DOUBTS OVER THE RIGHTS OF THE SABAH PEOPLE, DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR SAID THIS SHOULD NOT ARISE AT ALL BECAUSE THERE WOULD BE NO LOSS OF ANYONE'S RIGHTS.

HE SAID THAT WHEN KUALA LUMPUR BECAME FEDERAL TERRITORY NO ONE LOST ANY OF HIS RIGHTS AND THE SAME WOULD APPLY TO LABUAN.

HE EXPRESSED THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT'S APPRECIATION TO THE SABAH GOVERNMENT FOR ITS FAR-SIGHTEDNESS AND GENEROSITY IN GIVING UP LABUAN FOR CONVERSION INTO FEDERAL TERRITORY. -- BERNAMA