

PM hits out at foreign instigators

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KUCHING, Thurs. — Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today criticised groups who have told the people, including the Sarawak natives, to reject development and continue with their primitive lifestyle in the jungle.

In an apparent reference to recent interference by European individuals in instigating the Penans of Sarawak, Dr Mahathir said:

"There are groups who are left behind. They too want development. But instigators come and tell them that development is bad and they should stay in the jungle and plant a little padi, burn a bit of the jungle for farming and hunt for food.

"They discourage the people from wearing modern clothes and tell them that wearing a piece of cloth is good enough ... so that Europeans can come and see that these are primitive people -- living in a zoo."

Speaking at the launching of National Farmers' and Fishermen's Day at Dewan Santapan in Petra Jaya this morning, the Prime Minister said these groups had told the people that they must not change their ways because "it is your

culture which you must preserve — one of not wearing shoes and always feeling hungry and falling ill."

"These people come to Sarawak and live in the jungle and then advise our people not to accept development ... that our Government is bad because they want to bring development. They tell the natives that they must remain as they are so that anthropologists from Europe can come and study our primitive people."

He said because the so-called anthropologists wanted to study Malaysia's primitive peoples, the natives were the ones who had to suffer the inconvenience of being bitten by mosquitoes, falling ill and being left behind.

Development was the privilege of the *rakyat* and "foreigners" had no right to interfere by telling them they should reject development.

"They drive in posh cars but they want us to walk in the jungle. Don't believe these foreign instigators because they have different objectives — to preserve Malaysia as a

Progress for all, says PM

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country which time has left behind.

"Because they have become modern they don't know what it is like for a country to be left behind. They like to say 'look at these primitive people who still haven't acquired knowledge or education and are only experts in hunting with blowpipes'. Good for them, but we are the ones who suffer."

He said development was for all whether they were Penan, Chinese, Malay, Indian, Kadazan or Bajau and no one should obstruct this.

Sarawak has been the focus of international attention following interference by several European individuals, environmental and conservation groups in the State's Fourth and Fifth Divisions over the past months.

An Australian botanist Petr Faigl was arrested by police in Long Leng in the Fourth Division of Sarawak in late February and deported for helping to organise the natives, particularly the Penans, to set up blockades in logging areas.

Swiss artist Bruno Manser who claims to be a "researcher" has been living illegally among the Penans in the jungles of Northern Sarawak for more than two years and is still on the run.

Both of them are part of a network connected to international and local groups involved in instigating the Penans to reject development.

The Prime Minister said the nation depended on agricultural development and that traditional and modern methods of agriculture could complement each other.

However, while farmers could fall back to traditional farming methods for experience they had to rely on modern agriculture to embark on large-scale estate development if they wanted better benefits.

"If you compare the modern sector which has massive estates and the traditional sector which has only small areas, the former will reap better profits.

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