

\$40m for Orang Asli under FMP

Move to upgrade living standard

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KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. — A total of \$40 million has been allocated for socio-economic programmes to upgrade the living standard of Orang Asli under the Fifth Malaysia Plan (FMP), Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

The Prime Minister also said existing facilities and schemes for their benefit would be improved to ensure that the Orang Asli "progress step by step in tandem with national development".

Dr Mahathir, who was opening the museum of the Orang Asli Affairs Department in Gombak, 24km from here, said six new resettlement schemes for about 1,000 Orang Asli fa-

milies would be developed under the plan.

The Orang Asli community would also be encouraged to take part in Felda land schemes, especially in areas where their numbers were too small to allow for the opening of resettlement schemes.

He hoped the community would enjoy a rapid and systematic socio-economic development, one that they would all accept well.

Dr Mahathir said in improving the welfare of the Orang Asli in education, two hostels costing about \$2.4 million, were being built — one in Raub, Pahang and the other at Bukit Lanjan, Selangor.

By NURAINA SAMAD

Steps to further improve medical facilities for the community were being undertaken, he said, adding that the Orang Asli hospital in Gombak was now being upgraded with new equipment at a cost of \$3.3 million.

Dr Mahathir also spoke of the successful programmes for the Orang Asli community under the Fourth Malaysia Plan, which included small businesses and industries.

Under the plan, five regrouping projects were carried out for about 23,000 Orang Asli along the Main Range, he said, adding that a total of 13,600 hectares of land was provided for them.

Dr Mahathir also recorded the Government's gratitude to the Orang Asli community, particularly those in the interior, for helping the security forces against the communists in the past years.

He hoped that they would continue to help although the communist threat now was not as serious as before.

On the museum, Dr Mahathir hoped that the heritage of the Orang Asli could now be better preserved there.

He was also pleased with the proposal by the Orang Asli Affairs Department to make the museum a tourist centre.

Dr Mahathir, who was accompanied by his wife, Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Ali, later witnessed a real Orang Asli wedding.