

Malaysia 'hurt' by Charles' allegations on Penans

KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs.
— Malaysia had already informed the British Government that it was concerned with Prince Charles' allegations regarding the Penans might be misconstrued as the truth.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today that Malaysia believed that this was possible because of Prince Charles' status and influence in the international community.

He said that Prince Charles' allegation that the Government was waging "collective genocide" against the nomadic tribesmen was untrue.

"We feel hurt not because of allegations of indiscriminate logging but because of claims that we resorted to genocide of the Penans," he added.

"If we don't correct this, the world will tend to believe the statement made by someone of such status and influence," said the Prime Minister.

Prince Charles had said on Feb 6 that the Penans, estimated about 9,000, were being harassed and in some cases, imprisoned, for defending their tribal lands against logging.

He made the comparison to the fate of the Yanomami Indians of Brazil who are being threatened out of their ancestral land due to gold prospecting by outsiders.

The protest note was sent to the British Foreign Office by the Malaysian High Commission in London last week.