

Panel to look into Orang Asli welfare

ASLI JUL 1990

KUALA LUMPUR, Sun. — The Home Ministry has set up a committee to look into issues relating to the welfare of Orang Asli, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

The ministerial committee, set up on June 1, will be represented by Orang Asli heads, Orang Asli Affairs Department (JHEOA) officers and Ministry officials.

"The committee will look into problems faced by the Orang Asli and find solutions," Dr Mahathir said after hosting a visit by 200 Orang Asli heads from the country at his Seri Perdana residence here.

The committee is headed by the Home Ministry Secretary-General.

Earlier in his speech, Dr Mahathir reaffirmed the Government's commitment to continue taking steps to improve the lives of Orang Asli.

He said the Government was working harder to ensure the Orang Asli were not left out in all develop-

ment efforts, including education and the economy.

"I am happy to note that many Orang Asli children are receiving education and that some of them have even made it to the universities."

He said initially the Government had problems helping the Orang Asli because they were separated from the outside world, but now they had more chances to take part in outside activities.

"The Government will continue to ensure that the Orang Asli community enjoys good housing facilities and earnings.

"We also understand their problems such as logging and we are trying to take every possible measure to ensure that they also benefit from this."

He said the Government was concerned about the difficulties faced by the Orang Asli due to erosion and other environmental problems caused by logging.

"We are aware of the

problem and we will solve it by talking to the State Governments and the JHEOA."

Dr Mahathir added that the Orang Asli community would also not be left out in politics.

"We had an Orang Asli representative in the Dewan Negara but his term ended recently. We will now hold talks with Orang Asli associations and the JHEOA and appoint a new Orang Asli Senator.

The Orang Asli representative in the Dewan Negara, Hassan Nam, ended his five-year term last February.

Dr Mahathir also said Orang Asli community had been faithful to the Barisan Nasional Government since independence in 1957 and hoped that they would continue to do so.

He also said the allowances for the Orang Asli heads would be increased.

He did not elaborate but it was understood that the Orang Asli heads were paid \$200 per month.