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MAHATHIR-SQUATTERS
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PULAU PINANG, AUG 19 (BERNAMA) -- DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR MOHAMAD SAID TODAY THE GOVERNMENT'S ACTION IN TAKING LAND OCCUPIED BY SQUATTERS IN THE TOWN AREAS IS NOT MEANT TO BRING HARDSHIP TO THE PEOPLE BUT RATHER TO PROVIDE MORE HOUSING FACILITIES.

HE SAID THE GOVERNMENT WAS FORCED TO TAKE SUCH ACTION ALTHOUGH IT SYMPATHISED WITH THE SQUATTERS, AS IT HAD NO ALTERNATIVE.

THE SITES, HE SAID, WERE NEEDED FOR DEVELOPMENT, ESPECIALLY FOR HOUSING TO MEET THE DEMAND FOR ACCOMMODATION.

HE WAS SPEAKING AT THE GROUND-BREAKING CEREMONY FOR THE POLICE HOUSING PROJECT AT BANDAR BARU AIR ITAM, HERE TODAY.

THE PRIME MINISTER SAID, FOR EXAMPLE, THAT AN AREA OCCUPIED BY 200 TO 300 SQUATTERS COULD BE TURNED INTO A HOUSING PROJECT FOR ABOUT 60,000 PEOPLE. -- MORE

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DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR REGRETTED THAT THE TAKING OF SUCH LAND FOR DEVELOPMENT HAD BEEN TURNED INTO A POLITICAL ISSUE BY THE OPPOSITION.

HE SAID ALTHOUGH THE GOVERNMENT HAD TO BEAR THE BRUNT FOR THE UNPOPULAR ACTION, SOME OF THE PEOPLE WHO RECEIVED THE HOUSES WERE STILL NOT THANKFUL TO THE GOVERNMENT.

IN SOME SCHEMES, RESIDENTS HAD SET UP BRANCHES OF POLITICAL PARTIES TO OPPOSE THE GOVERNMENT, HE SAID.

ON THE POLICE HOUSING SCHEME, HE SAID EFFORTS WERE BEING MADE TO SPEED UP THE IMPLEMENTATION OF MORE SCHEMES.

HE SAID POLICE PERSONNEL HAD CONTRIBUTED GREATLY TOWARDS THE NATION'S SECURITY AND AS SUCH THEY DESERVED BETTER ACCOMMODATION TO ENABLE THEM TO UPGRADE THEIR PERFORMANCE. -- MORE

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THE AIR ITAM PROJECT IS PART OF THE GOVERNMENT PROGRAMME TO PROVIDE PROPER HOMES FOR POLICE PERSONNEL.

THE \$500 MILLION PROJECT, UNDERTAKEN BY PERUMAHAN FARLIM (M) SDN BHD, WILL HAVE 980 APPARTMENT UNITS, EACH WITH THREE BEDROOMS AND TWO BATHROOMS.

A NEW POLICE STATION FOR AYER ITAM IS ALSO BEING BUILT ON THE 6HA SITE.

EARLIER, DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR PRESENTED KEYS TO APPARTMENT OWNERS AT MEWAH COURT, A MEDIUM-COST HOUSING SCHEME IN JALAN BATU LANCHANG HERE.

SPEAKING AT THE FUNCTION, HE SAID THE PEOPLE SHOULD BE THANKFUL THAT THE BARISAN NASIONAL GOVERNMENT WAS ABLE TO BUILD LOW-COST HOUSES COSTING \$25,000 EACH DESPITE THE INCREASE IN THE COST OF BUILDING MATERIALS.

THE APARTMENTS AT MEWAH COURT COST \$69,000 EACH.

PRESENT AT THE TWO FUNCTIONS WERE CHIEF MINISTER DR LIM CHONG EU AND EDUCATION MINISTER ANWAR IBRAHIM.--BERNAMA

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