

PM pledges to do more for Orang Asli

7 SEP 1990

By Ahmad A. Talib

BANDAR MUADZAM SHAH, Thurs. - Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today commended the Orang Asli community for their participation in development programmes to improve their quality of life.

The Prime Minister said more would be done to bring the community into the mainstream of national development.

In this regard, Dr Mahathir said efforts would be made to retain and promote Orang Asli culture. For a start, the Orang Asli's skill at using the blowpipe would be given a boost by upgrading it into a national recreation exercise.

He said a blowpipe competition would be held annually with a challenge trophy to be provided by the Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister said

this at an Orang Asli gathering at the Kedaik Orang Asli regroupment scheme, about 15km from here.

More than 6,000 Orang Asli from all across the nation gathered here today in a unique meeting with the Prime Minister.

Dr Mahathir was accompanied by his wife Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamed Ali, MCA president Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik, MIC president Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu, Gerakan president Datuk Seri Dr Lim Keng Yaik, Human Resources Minister Datuk Lim Ah Lek, Culture and Tourism Minister Datuk Sabbaruddin Chik, Menteri Besar Tan Sri Khalil Yaakob and other State dignitaries.

An air of festivity pervaded the area as hawkers from nearby towns and members of the Orang Asli Association paraded their

wares in bamboo makeshift stalls.

On sale were foodstuff, T-shirts, used jeans and electrical appliances.

With all the development emphasis given to the Orang Asli community, Dr Mahathir hoped that the community would not be influenced by disruptive elements who may want to create disunity and dissatisfaction.

He said the 72,000 strong Orang Asli community should not emulate the ungrateful attitude of some Malaysians who have a short memory of Government help.

The Prime Minister was referring to a complaint by a small group of people who said they were unhappy at the Government's role in bringing stranded Malaysians home in the wake of the Gulf crisis.

Dr Mahathir said: "I am

very disappointed to learn that these people were unhappy after all that the Government had done to bring the stranded Malaysians home safely."

After doing everything possible to evacuate these people, including putting them up at five-star hotels at government expense, some of the relatives have the cheek to say this was not enough, Dr Mahathir added.

(A small group of relatives of some stranded Malaysians wrote a letter to the New Straits Times today complaining of the lack of attention by the Government in helping the stranded Malaysians).

The Prime Minister said the people should not be too quick to criticise the Government.

He said the Government used almost every possible

means to bring home the Malaysians safely.

This reflected its seriousness in promoting the interest of the people.

Expanding his point, Dr Mahathir said Malaysia had often been criticised by some industrialised nations and non-governmental groups with narrow vested interests for being undemocratic.

The Prime Minister drew everyone's attention to the plight of the Mohawk Red Indians in Canada where stern government action finally quashed any attempt by the community to demand their basic rights.

This certainly was not how the plight of the Penans was handled in Malaysia, Dr Mahathir said, adding that the Government won over the Penans through practical solutions and persuasion.