

Accept changes, people urged

KUALA ROMPIN, Thurs. — The people must accept changes if they are to enjoy the benefits of development, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

At the same time, the various communities must integrate more closely as this would indirectly help those who were backward to catch up faster, the Prime Minister said.

He said the Government was particularly concerned over the progress of the 72,000 orang asli who were in need of much assistance compared with other communities.

"We will step up efforts to promote the integration of the orang asli with the others so that they can be on par in the political, socio-economic and education fields.

"As a democratic government, the Barisan Nasional has always been fair in serving the multiracial society.

"We will see to it that no one, including the orang asli, is left out," he said when launching an orang asli settlement and a national orang asli gathering in Kedaik near here. About 8,000 people were present.

Dr Mahathir said the Government

was prepared to help the orang asli but it could not attend to all their needs at one go.

"We have never suppressed or ill-treated the orang asli, unlike certain developed nations which discriminate against their native communities," he said.

He cited Canada and Australia as examples of developed nations which did not care for their native communities.

Yet, he said, the two were among the countries which wrongly accused Malaysia of ill-treating the Penans in Sarawak.

Dr Mahathir said the Government had never abused the native communities, adding that the Penans who obstructed logging activities in Sarawak were only advised and persuaded to pull down their barricades and accept changes for their betterment.

He said the native communities in Canada and Australia were not so fortunate as the two governments took away all their land without even compensating them.

"When the Mohawks in Canada protested recently against a move

to take over their land for the building of a golf course, the Canadian Government sent in troops to tear down their barricades and snatch their land."

In Tasmania, Australia, he said, natives were killed or jailed for obstructing development.

He regretted that there were locals who joined the foreign powers in accusing Malaysia of having neglected the native community.

Dr Mahathir said the Government had set up schools and hostels for orang asli children besides providing other facilities.

"Today, many orang asli are pursuing courses in universities and some have become lecturers.

"This shows that they are not inferior and can compete with others if they accept changes," Dr Mahathir said.

Also present at the launch were Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Ali, MCA president Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik, MIC president Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu, Gerakan president Datuk Seri Dr Lim Keng Yaik and Pahang Mentri Besar Tan Sri Haji Mohamed Khalil Yaakob.