

Dr M wants Penang to shed its dirty image

SERDANG, Thurs. — Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad wants Penang to shed its image as the dirtiest place in the country.

Dr Mahathir said that unless cleanliness laws were strictly enforced, tourists might no longer consider Penang Island as the Pearl of the Orient but as the Rubbish Bin of the Orient.

"I understand the situation in Penang is a result of politicking by those who instigate the people to oppose efforts to clean up the state," he commented.

It is understood that some politicians had disrupted the work of enforcement workers by trying to protect their electorate, particularly hawkers and traders.

Dr Mahathir was speaking to newsmen after visiting Mardi.

Yesterday, Local Government director-general Lim Cheng Tatt said cleanliness and maintenance had deteriorated in the past few years, so much so that the island was now the dirtiest place in the country.

He cited as examples the Botanical Garden and

Gurney Drive that had not been well maintained.

He added that Ipoh, Malacca, Kuala Lumpur and Petaling Jaya had become cleaner.

Dr Mahathir said he did not mind if Penangites picked the opposition instead of the Barisan Nasional to lead the state government as long as Penang was clean.

He said Kuala Lumpur was not burdened with problems faced by Penang as it was a Federal Territory.

"In Kuala Lumpur, we do not have to worry about winning elections

but instead we place our emphasis on cleanliness and beautification," he added.

Dr Mahathir also urged hawkers to give priority to cleanliness, adding that profits need not be compromised by emphasising cleanliness.

He said hawkers should consider preparing food at centralised kitchens as one of the steps: "All they have to do is to heat the food by using microwave oven before serving the customers. There is no need for cleaning or on the spot cooking."

The method, he said,

was similar to the one adopted by fast food managements where the taste and quality served at any outlet remained the same.

"Our hawkers should bear in mind the need to meet the demands of mass consumption," he said.

Dr Mahathir was taken to a mock-up modern hawkers centre designed by Mardi officials where he had lunch.

He was also taken to its food technology centre and shown the various new techniques of food preparation and packaging.

Dr Mahathir said there was no reason why local food could not be sold on a large scale if food foreign to locals such as hotdogs and hamburgers could be successfully sold here.

In Penang, Chief Minister Dr Koh Tsu Koon warned that heavy penalties would be introduced if the people continued to be indifferent.

He said the authorities would be very strict against litterbugs and added: "The people should be self disciplined instead of the State Government having to adopt such harsh measures."

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