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Mahathir-Sarawak

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MTRT, May 24 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today he was impressed with the rapid development in Sarawak and its progress has now surpassed that of some of the other states.

He said the state was very backward when it just achieved independence through Malaysia but now development was not only visible in Kuching city but in the other towns as well.

The towns were now cleaner and more orderly with wide sealed roads, he told a press conference at the end of his four-day official visit to Sarawak which covered Kuching, Bintulu and the Mulu National Park here.

The Prime Minister who described his trip this time around as the longest he had made to Sarawak, said he was able to have a good look at the state's progress and feel the people's friendliness and happiness.

He commended the state government for willing to spend its own funds to implement development activities instead of waiting for federal grants.-- more

♥24/05/17-30MST

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According to the Prime Minister, this may be because the Sarawak government had huge financial sources but other states like Sabah, which also had such resources, were not as progressive as Sarawak.

One reason why Sarawak was so developed was its active construction efforts particularly in providing facilities for the people, said Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir.

He said he was impressed with development in Bintulu which he last visited in 1983, saying that over the past decade, the +belachan town+ had turned into a petro-chemical industrial centre.

According to him, other petrol-based industries would also be located in Bintulu to make the town, the country's largest industrial centre.

He said he was particularly fascinated by the natural beauty and over-hanging cliffs as well as the subterranean caves in the Mulu National Park which he described as a tourist centre with vast potential.-- more

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Mahathir - Mulu 3 Mulu National Park (repeat with additional information in para five)

The Prime Minister was accompanied by Sarawak Chief Minister Tan Sri Abdul Taib Mahmud and other dignitaries.

Tan Sri Abdul Taib said the Prime Minister's visit reflected the close relations between the people in Peninsular Malaysia and Sarawak.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir also announced that he would help pay the education expenses of three selected Penan children until university level.

Electricity supply would also be extended to +Long Berawan+ -- the longhouse of the Berawan residents at the national park.

Local residents presented the Prime Minister with a +Sumpit Kayu+ and Datuk Seri Datin Paduka Dr Siti Hasmah with a +Terendak+ (conical-shaped hat).

Earlier Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir inspected the \$8.4 million aerodrome now under construction at the National Park.

The project was scheduled for completion in April next year and would enable Twin Otter aircraft to ferry passengers from Miri to Mulu within 30 minutes.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir left by helicopter for Miri for Friday prayers.
-- Bernama

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Mahathir-Sarawak 4 Miri

According to him, the existing good rapport between the people in the state and in Peninsular Malaysia augured well for the future of the country and Sarawak's relations with the other states.

On the Penans, he said the tribe could not be left lagging behind development efforts because they, too, deserved a better life.

The Prime Minister questioned the motives of certain groups which championed the Penan cause because they, including Swiss fugitive Bruno Manser, clearly wished to profit from their studies on the tribe.

Bruno Manser had been reported to have reaped big profits from his lectures which included lies on the Penans, he added. -- Bernama