

Mulu caves to be major tourist draw

MIRI, Fri. — Plans are underway to turn the Mulu National Park with its fascinating caves into an international tourist attraction.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today the Mulu caves were the best in the world and has enormous potential to draw tourists from all over the world.

He hoped environmentalists would not object to the Government's efforts to turn the caves into a tourist attraction as it would be undemocratic to let the caves be accessible only to a small group who could afford to go there.

The Prime Minister, who spent a night at the park yesterday, said he hoped the Penans and Berawans would be able to earn a living from tourism at Mulu.

On the Penan issue, he hoped environmental groups would not disrupt the Government's good intentions to raise their living standards.

"There is no difference between the Penans and other people. It is just that they live in the jungles and they have their own set of values and culture," he said.

The Penans, he added, should not be deprived of their rights to change their lifestyle and to en-

joy the benefits of development.

Dr Mahathir said the Government would expose the attempts of people such as Swiss fugitive Bruno Manser who had been spreading lies about the country.

The Government had also detected one Anthony

Brooke who had been following in Mr Manser's footsteps.

Dr Mahathir said Mr Manser had come to Malaysia to stay with the Penans to study the tribe and after gathering information he needed, had gone overseas to badmouth Malaysia.

He said Mr Manser had been giving lectures in the comforts of Switzerland where "hot and cold running water" were available while making money for himself.

Dr Mahathir said it was not right to treat the Penans as a subject of anthropological studies.

Yesterday, the Prime Minister visited a group of Penans at the Mulu National Park where he was accorded a traditional welcome.

He was greeted by a group of Berawan and Penan elders who presented him with a blowpipe, and his wife, Datuk Seri Dr Siti Hasmah, with a headgear.

On the PBDS-PBB relationship, Dr Mahathir, who is also the Barisan chairman, hoped the parties would be able to work together.

He said bickering between the parties would not bring any benefits and that it was better for the PBDS to accept reality and to compromise