

PM tells why Penans must be guided

KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. — One day, a Penan may become the Prime Minister.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said this when asked by a reporter his vision for the community in view of the move by certain Western environmentalists to make today the World Penan Day.

Asked if there was a model for the Penans, Dr Mahathir said it existed in the United States where the Red

Indians were exterminated and now live on reserves.

"If you look at their plight, you will understand what will happen to the Penans if they are kept in the forests ... to eat monkeys and maggots and caterpillars."

"We believe that the Penans are humans like anyone else. Although my ancestors must have behaved very much like the Penans, fortunately they decided to

change their ways ... so I'm sitting here today talking to you.

"We feel that one day there might be a Penan Prime Minister of Malaysia, we never can tell, provided they are given a chance to get an education.

"To say that they should get an education only if they choose to, is not enough. We get civilisation forced on us to some extent by some people ... and this process is still

continuing," he said.

"For example, we are told that we are not democratic enough, and people want to ram their democracy down our throats.

"So what's wrong with us not ramming (civilisation) down the throats of the Penans, but feeding them with the kind of culture that will make them like any one of us. And maybe become a reporter and ask me questions about Penans?"

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