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GOVERNMENT WILL RESOLVE CHINESE RICE MILLERS PROBLEMS

Mahathir - millers

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ALOR SETAR, Dec 11 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today the government will strive to overcome the problems faced by Chinese rice millers in Kedah.

He said Agriculture Minister Datuk Seri Sanusi Junid would hold a meeting with the millers tomorrow to discuss their problems.

+We can overcome this problem. Even problems bigger than this we have resolved, + he told reporters after meeting several leaders of Chinese Rice Millers Associations at the Sultan Abdul Halim Airport here.

They included Chairman of the Kedah/Perlis Chinese Rice Millers Association, Encik Saw Kok Oon, the association's auditor Encik Ooi Ah Piau and the Secretary of the Kedah Sino-Malay Rice Millers Association Encik Chew Giok Kih. They were accompanied by the Chairman of the Kedah MCA Liaison Committee, Datuk William Chek.

According to the associations, many non-Bumiputera Rice Millers in Kedah would have to wind up their business because they were faced with the problem of getting padi whenever padi production in Kedah was lower than their milling capacity. . . more

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The Chinese rice millers' problems were compound by the ruling that non-Bumiputeras cannot buy padi at the LPN (National Padi and Rice Authority) purchasing centres which were only for Bumiputeras, the associations said.

They also said the LPN did not allow them to buy padi from Perlis and the authority competed with the Chinese rice millers by frequently increasing the milling capacity of LPN mills.

When asked whether the Chinese Rice Millers wanted the problem to be resolved before Dec 19 -- polling day for the Jerlun state by-election, the Prime Minister said: +The Chinese rice millers did not make any such threats only PAS said they did.+

On the PAS' move to use the Chinese rice millers issue as capital to further its election campaign in Jerlun, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said it was not a political problem and asked what PAS had done to resolve the problem faced by the millers.

Meanwhile Encik Saw said the association was satisfied with the Prime Minister's assurance that the problem would be resolved.

He hoped Kedah Menteri Besar Tan Sri Osman Aroff and Datuk Chek would attend the meeting tomorrow with Datuk Seri Sanusi.

Encik Saw stressed that the problem did not affect the associations' support for the Barisan Nasional. -- Bernama

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