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Mahathir-investors

PM UNHAPPY WITH ATTITUDE OF SOME STATE LEADERS IN DRAWING INVESTORS

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MELAKA, April 15, (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today expressed dissatisfaction with the attitude of leaders of several state governments who did nothing to attract foreign investors and on top of that imposed conditions to check their entry.

The Prime Minister, who declined to name the leaders or state whether they were from the Barisan Nasional (BN) or opposition, said these leaders should change their attitude if they wanted to develop their states.

"Some people think that we must squeeze the investors to obtain the maximum benefit," he told reporters after opening the Air Keroh d'Village resort and the Melaka in World Heritage convention, here.

He said such leaders force the investors to recruit workers from among the local people, give contracts to certain people, and direct the investors to refer to them before beginning any work.

Other investors, after learning of these problems, would shy away from the state, he said, adding that not only the state government would lose but also the local people looking for jobs. -- more

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When opening the resort earlier, Dr Mahathir said some state government leaders not only did not entertain foreign investors but also worked towards reducing incentives.

"Some leaders not only do not want to seek investors but are sometimes seen to be angry when investment is brought to their states," he said.

Praising the Melaka state government leaders who went overseas and also to Kuala Lumpur to draw investors, he said foreign investors should be treated well because their investment was vital for development and creation of jobs.

He said foreign investors should be advised in a proper manner if they made mistakes and they should not be penalised or forced to do something at the whims and fancies of the state government.

Dr Mahathir said investors could be accorded proper treatment by giving them land free for development, approving their application in 24 hours, and ensuring that government officers assisted the investors. -- more

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The Prime Minister said some state government leaders wanted investors to recruit workers from among the local people and not from other states, sometimes not even from other regions of their own state.

Referring to a recent demonstration against a foreign company purportedly because it did not recruit local people as workers, he said the action of the state government leaders might show that they gave priority to the local people.

However, he added, it was not actually so, and such a step would deny the state development because other investors would not want to face the similar problems.

Asked whether he was referring to the demonstration by 200 former workers of Hyundai Construction in front of the office of the South Korean company in Kuala Terengganu recently over recruitment of workers from elsewhere, Dr Mahathir said: "I do not want to say anything about that."

(Hyundai Construction had been engaged by Petronas for the gas refinery project in Kertih, Kemaman.)

On Usno secretary-general Encik Askalani Abdul Rahim's plea yesterday to the BN not to expel it from the coalition, Dr Mahathir said it was Usno which had sacked the BN by forging cooperation with Parti Bersatu Sabah (PBS) without informing the BN. -- Bernama

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