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Mahathir-Penan

PM NOT SURPRISED AT STORIES CONCOCTED ABOUT THE PENAN

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JOHOR BA HARU, Oct 11 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today he is not surprised at reports that a non-governmental group in the United States had raised a substantial amount of money by fabricating a story that the Penan of Sarawak are being abused. ⑧

"There are such people...who like to cash in on problems of their own making," he told reporters after a meeting with Johor Umno members at the Menteri Besar's official residence, here.

Dr Mahathir said there was actually no problem with the Penan but the group wanted to become their champion by creating problems.

The group had also portrayed itself as a champion solely to get money, he said when asked to comment on claims by an American author today that a non-governmental group in the U.S. had raised a substantial sum from its story about the Penan.

The author, Eric Hansen, had said that ironically not a cent of the money raised would go to the Penan whom the Rainforest Action Network (RAN) claimed were facing "rape, abuse and cultural genocide". -- more

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"I'm not surprised that such a thing has happened. There may have been more people going about soliciting donations because they want to use the money for themselves," Dr Mahathir said.

Asked whether the group should apologise, especially to the Sarawak government, he said that to him apologies from such people would have no value.

Asked what had prompted the group to act thus, he said that normally groups like this took upon themselves to monitor the ills of the world.

Hence they set up bodies like "Asia Watch" ostensibly to find fault with other countries as if they themselves had not erred.

"In fact in their own countries they commit all kinds of injustices and I suggest that we have a "Europe Watch", "America Watch" and "Australia Watch"," he said. -- more

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The prime minister also questioned their right to criticise Malaysia.

He said what was interesting was that they wanted to be the guardians of the morality of the world when they themselves had no morals.

Asked about a news agency report from Jerusalem that Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin will stop over in Malaysia on his return from China, Dr Mahathir said: "We have not received a request that he wants to stop by. I do not think he will." -- Bernama

MKO JK

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