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Mahathir - people

NO REASON FOR MALAYSIANS TO BE POOR- DR MAHATHIR

PASIR PUTEH, Kelantan, Feb 8 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said tonight there is no reason for Malaysians to be poor in their own country which is so peaceful and rich in natural resources.

They should use their energy, time and brains to achieve progress and develop their talents, he said.

He drew the attention of locals to the willingness of the more than one million foreigners to come over to Malaysia to seek their fortune.

Some of them had risked their lives to cross the high seas or had parted with much money just to come to Malaysia and work, he said.

The Prime Minister was addressing more than 10,000 people with home he broke the fast at the padang of the Sekolah Menengah Tok Janggut here.

"If people from foreign lands are rushing to Malaysia, why are not Malaysians making use of the opportunities in their own country," he said.

Dr Mahathir raised the issue of poverty after being saddened by what he saw earlier at a fishing hamlet in Pantai Baru near Bachok where the people were still very poor.

The Prime Minister accompanied by Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah arrived in Kota Baharu today for a brief visit.

He said fishermen in Pantai Baru were still poor because they only depended on traditional fishing methods.

They should also use their energy and time to do other activities such as handicraft making during the wet season, when they did not put out to sea, to supplement their income, he said.

Speaking to reporters later, Dr Mahathir said the Federal Government had always been ready to help Kelantan in its development efforts.

"We are ready to help provided such help is not politicised," he said.

Asked whether the Federal Government had made any special allocation for Kelantan's development, Dr Mahathir said the allocation was similar to the one for other states.

"If cooperation is forthcoming from the Kelantan Government we can have the allocation and implement projects," he said.

On the reported rift between PAS and Parti Melayu Semangat 46, which are members of the Angkatan Perpaduan Ummah which is ruling Kelantan, the Prime Minister said he was not surprised over this as both parties did not have the same perception.

"Semangat 46 originated from Umno and hence it cannot completely overlook Umno's stand," he said.

He said if Semangat 46 ignored Umno's stand, it need not be formed in the first place for they could have just joined PAS in the very beginning.

Dr Mahathir, who is Umno President and Chairman of the Kelantan Umno Liaison Committee, reiterated that Umno's doors were open to Semangat 46 members who wished to rejoin unconditionally. -- BERNAMA