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Mahathir-disabled

PM WANTS MORE JOB OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE DISABLED

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 12 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad wants the disabled to continue to be given opportunities to work both in the public and private sectors in the country.

The Prime Minister said the creation of job opportunities for the disabled as well as their employment without prejudice could enhance their living standard and at the same time provide better security for their future generation.

"The allocation of one percent job opportunities for the disabled in the public sector should be implemented more aggressively and the private sector should also follow suit," he said at the launching of a ceremony for the disabled at the Putra World Trade Centre (PWTC) here.

The Special Programme "Towards Excellence For The Disabled 1996" was attended by about 2,000 disabled people nationwide.

Dr Mahathir said the government was concerned about the welfare of the disabled and this was reflected by the various measures taken including the exemption of income tax for them and their family.

Dr Mahathir said that in the 1996 Budget, the government raised tax exemption to a family with a disabled child from RM1,600 to RM5,000 each.

He said the maximum tax exemption given for the purchase of basic aid tools had also been raised from RM3,000 to RM5,000 while tax cuts for medical expenses were also increased from RM1,000 to RM5,000.

He said one's physical disability should not prevent him or her from advancing and participating in the development of the nation.

He said physical disability was not and should not be viewed as a problem in the context of social or economic development.

"A social environment that provides positive dynamism to the disabled with regard to their acceptance and the support given as well as an understanding for their needs, will create various potentials for achievement which we ourselves did not anticipate before," he said.

The Prime Minister said it was not impossible for Malaysia to be a model for excellence of the disabled people in the region in the near future if planning and programming of activities for the disabled group were done properly.

In this context, he was confident that the relevant parties involved in the development and planning of programmes for the disabled group could carry out their responsibilities properly.

On the provision of facilities for the group at work places, homes, public buildings and public transport, Dr Mahathir said efforts towards this objective had already been carried out through the amendment to the Uniform Building By-Laws 1984.

He said the amendment, among others, adhered to the "Code of Practice for Access for Disabled People for Public Buildings" which was approved in 1990 and followed by the state governments.

However, he said that the "Code of Practice for Disabled People Outside Building 1993" was still in the process of implementation.

Meanwhile, National Unity and Social Development Minister Datin Paduka Hajah Zaleha Ismail told reporters that she hoped more government departments as well as the private sector would employ the disabled.

She said, so far there were 2,000 disabled people working in the private sector while 1,000 were in government service.

At the ceremony, Dr Mahathir presented the incentive scheme award to

disabled athletes. -- BERNAMA