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Mahathir-food

MAHATHIR:ADOPT NEW APPROACH TO LARGE-SCALE CATERING

By: Zainoor Sulaiman

OKAYAMA, JAPAN, July 21 (Bernama) -- The government is to ask federal and state authorities to adopt new approaches to food catering on a large scale, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

The country's enlarged population has given rise to the need for such approaches, he said.

Provision of clean eateries offering food at reasonable prices would definitely attract customers away from dirty stalls, he said.

Dr Mahathir was speaking to Malaysian journalists here on the eve of completing his two months' leave overseas.

The prime minister, who is on a one-week working visit during leave in Japan, said he had visited kitchens and restaurants to see how Japanese food operators could prepare 12,000 packets of several types of meals four hours before serving them.

Dr Mahathir said the same concept was applicable to Malaysia where popular dish like "nasi lemak" could be prepared on a large scale without compromising quality and flavour and priced reasonably.

Malaysians also should gradually change their life-style as the country progressed further.

"We can't be ushering the year 2000, 2500 by still eating at roadside stalls which have plastic sheet for a roof and amidst the stench of drains," he said.

"This is like people who refuse to progress," he said.

The prime minister hoped all parties, including the media, would help the government bring about an attitudinal change among the people to prepare them for the coming era of a developed nation.

"We're already a semi-developed nation but we want to live and work in the old way and this is not suitable any more," he said.

Dr Mahathir said Japan impressed him in that despite being a developed nation, all its workers are its own people because of efficient manpower management.

"Although not as large as Japan's, the Malaysian population is now reaching 20 million and yet we still face labour shortage," he said.

"If we refuse to change the way we work, we'll be flooded with foreign workers (who now number more than 1.7 million)," he said.

In England, he said, eight workers could take care of a 1,500 ha farm whereas in Malaysia, three people are needed to work on a 1.6 ha plot.

Dr Mahathir today visited the Hayashibara biochemical laboratory 50 km from here to see the production of Interferon (IFN), a bioactive ingredient used in the treatment of viral diseases.

The high-technology laboratory produces about 60 grammes of IFN annually at a cost of millions of ringgit.

Their sale to local and foreign pharmaceutical companies fetches US\$600 million. (US\$1=RM2.61)

Despite its high capital outlay and technology, the laboratory only employs 60 people.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia was thinking of collaborating with the laboratory by sending officers and doctorate students for training and doing research there.

The prime minister, who is accompanied by his wife Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali, is scheduled to depart for home tomorrow.-- Bernama

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