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PM urges village folk to adjust to changes

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KUALA KEDAH, Sat. - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today called on the people to accept changes and adopt a modern lifestyle.

He said the days when people stayed in dilapidated houses and filthy environment should be a thing of the past as the country surged forward to become a developed nation.

The Prime Minister said the people could not remain living in their traditional way because times had changed.

"Therefore to adjust to the changes, our lifestyle has to change and we should prepare ourselves to accept the changes," he told a gathering of fishermen and residents of Kuala Kedah who are involved in a relocation programme at the fishing village.

Under the programme, about 600 families, mostly fishermen, will be moved out of their dilapidated squatter houses to stay in flats.

However, some of them are believed to be against the idea of staying in flats and have demanded that the State Government keep its earlier promise to give them a wooden house each.

The promise to give them wooden houses was made under the previous State administration but Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Sanusi Junid decided that flats be built to house the fishermen and residents because the State Government did not want to move them from a "slum village and create another slum township" in the area.

Dr Mahathir convinced the residents that the Government never intended to victimise them.

"We will help as much as possible to give the residents a comfortable place to stay," he told about 2,000 residents.

Also present were Sanusi and State Executive Councillors.

Ekran Berhad which will undertake the project exhibited the model of the flats to the residents at the site.

Dr Mahathir advised the residents, mostly squatters, to agree to the State Government's proposal to build flats because it could not afford to build individual houses due to high land cost.

"We have to accept the new lifestyle and I hope the residents here will not appeal against the project," he added.

Earlier, in his speech, Sanusi said that the State Government had decided not to proceed with its initial plan to resettle the fishermen.

He said the proposed wooden houses were found to be unsuitable in view of the State Government's aspiration to transform Kuala Kedah into a modern township.

"After consulting experts, we found a new formula to build better houses," he added.

The State Government had proposed an alternative plan to build multi-storey flats comprising 2,112 units at the proposed resettlement site.

The facilities proposed at the site include a police station, a community hall, a kindergarten, a mosque, shops, a recreational area and parking bays.

Before the gathering Dr Mahathir attended a briefing on several development projects at Wisma Darul Aman in Alor Star.

He was briefed by A'Formosa Golf Resort Sdn Bhd executive director Datuk Kevin Lau Eng Guang on his plan to develop a RM30 million water theme park at Bandar Darul Aman in Jitra.

The name of the theme park has been proposed as Jitra Waterworld.

Lau told reporters later that the theme park would be built on an eight-hectare site.

He said the facilities would be much better than the A'Formosa theme park in Malacca which is also owned by him.

Lau expected to start work on the project soon and said that he would only need a year to complete it.

The theme park is also expected to attract tourists from Thailand.

Dr Mahathir was also briefed on the proposed coastal reclamation project by National Hydraulic and Research Institute director-general Prof Abdul Aziz Ibrahim.

One of the proposals by Samudera Baru Darul Aman Sdn Bhd is to reclaim the entire 100km Kedah coastline and transform it into a world class coastal metropolis.

The master plan proposes to reclaim 16,300ha consisting of nine main islands.

Among the facilities to be set up on two of the islands are aerospace industries, a conventional container port, a cruise terminal, a power station, a wetland reserve, a residential and resort area, an international airport, a deep sea port, a rail link and a free trade zone.

Dr Mahathir was also briefed by SKS Venture Sdn Bhd consultants on the development of Pulau Bunting.

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