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Mahathir-CPF

MAHATHIR BAFFLED OVER SINGAPORE'S PREFERENTIAL TREATMENT

KULIM, July 2 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today chided the Singapore government over its preferential treatment on Malaysians from Peninsular Malaysia and Sabah and Sarawak.

Maybe the Singapore government regarded the people from Sabah and Sarawak as not part of Malaysians, he told a news conference after opening the AIC Semiconductor Sdn Bhd factory at the Kulim High-Tech Park, here.

He said this when responding to reporters' questions over the double standards practised by the Singapore government by allowing people from Sabah and Sarawak to withdraw their savings from the Central Provident Fund (CPF) when they quit their jobs and leave the republic.

But those from the peninsula could only make full withdrawals when they reach 55 and leave Singapore permanently.

" From here, we can see their discriminations against Malaysians from the peninsula and those from Sabah and Sarawak," he said.

Nevertheless, the government would try to negotiate the matter with the Singapore government, he said.

It had been reported that about 50,000 Malaysians are CPF members with total savings of about S\$1 billion.

On Monday, Singapore Foreign Minister S. Jayakumar told Parliament that the CPF issue and the republic's long-term water supply agreement with Malaysia could be sorted out in the context of a wider cooperation package between the two countries.

Singapore's Manpower Minister Dr Lee Boon Yang had said last month that Peninsular Malaysians were treated differently from those from Sabah and Sarawak because of "historical links."

Dr Mahathir also criticised the local mass media which he said were more inclined to write about the perceived differences among leaders of the country.

He said although he had good relations with his deputy Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim but the media felt otherwise.

"They think although we are nice to each other, actually we are not.

"You (reporters) can read my heart better than I can," he quipped.

-- BERNAMA

AHM TS