

20 APR 1998

Mahathir-Sensitivity

TAKE INTO CONSIDERATION SENSITIVITIES OF OTHERS, SAYS PM

KUALA LUMPUR, April 20 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today the sensitivities of all groups must be taken into consideration when implementing any project to avoid problems later.

"We don't want to do something that may touch on the people's sensitivity, so that there will be no problems in our country due to people ignoring other people's sensitivities," he said.

"Relocating a cemetery is certainly something sensitive," Dr Mahathir said, referring to the proposed relocation of graves from Jalan Sungai Besi and Jalan Loke Yew here to Semenyih, Hulu Langat.

He told reporters this after witnessing the signing of an agreement between Pribena Construction and the Selangor Hokkien Association to facilitate the relocation of the more than 100,000 graves.

The Prime Minister said the relocation of the cemetery was necessary as the present site in the heart of the town was no longer conducive.

On claims that some people in Semenyih were unhappy with the proposed relocation, Dr Mahathir said: "We have asked them... there are always some people who are not happy.

"When we want to make a road, people are unhappy, even when we want to build a mosque there are people who are dissatisfied. So if we need to ask everyone until all of them are happy, there will be nothing that we can develop in this country."

In his speech earlier, Dr Mahathir said the relocation of the graves would be carried out in accordance with customary and religious requirements.

The present cemetery on 175 hectares of land contains on the graves of people of Hokkien, Kwangtung and Kwangsai Chinese clans as well as that of Roman Catholics, Buddhists and Japanese people.

Used since 1827, it is also the cremation site for Hindus and Sikhs.

Pribena Construction director Cheong Wee Wong said the company would develop a new cemetery on a 50-hectare site in Semenyih for the Selangor Hokkien Association, and new ones for the other communities on another 125 hectares.

Cheong said religious and traditional ceremonies would be held during the relocation as were done in countries like Singapore, Thailand and Taiwan.

He said the company would be signing similar agreements with associations representing the other communities.

Cheong said the relocation exercise would take three to five years.

The site in Jalan Sungai Besi and Jalan Loke Yew belongs to the federal government and would be used for development, he added.

--BERNAMA

RAZ SK