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Mahathir-Fishermen

FISHERMEN'S INCOME WILL BE INCREASED, SAYS DR MAHATHIR

DUNGUN, July 30 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today the government will strive to ensure that fishermen earn higher income through a new and modern fishing technique.

He said that this would reduce the number of poor fishermen and at the same time increase the country's fish catch.

The new technique, he said, would be studied under the Second Overall Perspective Plan (2000 to 2010).

"We are studying this matter and will introduce a new fishing technique to improve the income of fishermen and to get fresher fish," he said at a gathering of fishermen and their families at Kampung Seberang Pintasan, here.

Dr Mahathir said that the problem of poverty among fishermen could not be overcome if they still practise the old fishing methods which not only resulted in poor catch but also landed fish which were not very fresh.

The prime minister said that the country needed fishermen who have knowledge and able to practise the new fishing technique so that they would earn better income and would not remain poor.

Dr Mahathir said that even though the government's proposal would not guarantee that the younger generation especially children of fishermen who earn higher income would not opt for other professions, the country required fishermen modern in their outlook and have the knowledge to use the latest equipment.

He said that such a plan was made because the government realised that fishermen could now no longer rely on the old fishing methods which had proven to result in poor catch and did not help improve the lot of the fishermen.

"Fishermen must be bold to change our (fishing) culture by being prepared to leave their families for weeks or months to venture into deep-sea fishing," he said.

Dr Mahathir said that in this way, they would not only get a better catch but fish landed would also be fresh.

"There are not many fish offshore...as such, income will not be high, causing us to remain poor and the country does not get fresh fish," he said.

Dr Mahathir said that the government was also aware that in time to come, the number of fishermen in Malaysia would be reduced as fishing is not an enterprise handed over from father to son.

He said that even if such a situation could help reduce the number of the poor and the very poor in the country, the government could not completely do away with fishermen as they were still needed to produce fresh fish for the country.

"We still need fishermen as we need fresh (fish) for consumption...if the number of fishermen is increasingly reduced we will certainly not be able to consume fresh fish anymore," he said.

Meanwhile, the prime minister said that the government would strive to help the have-nots in the country and one way of doing it is to impose tax on those who are wealthy.

He said it was the revenue derived from them that was utilised by the government to provide various facilities to the have-nots.

In this respect, Dr Mahathir said that it was not proper for certain quarters especially the opposition parties to incite the people to hate

those who were wealthy.

"Some quarters incite us to hate the rich...from whom do we collect taxes if not from the rich," he said.

At the function, Dr Mahathir presented 14 units of computers to 14 schools in six districts in Terengganu.

This morning, Dr Mahathir and Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamed Ali had breakfast and a meeting with state Barisan Nasional leaders at the Seri Molek Inn, here.

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