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Mahathir-Asli

GOVT GUARANTEES FUTURE OF THE ASLI COMMUNITY, SAYS DR MAHATHIR

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 16 (Bernama) -- The government guarantees the future of the Orang Asli community in this country because they have certain rights that will not be neglected, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today.

"In certain countries, the aborigines are not guaranteed of their future and rights, some were even murdered...they are victimised and suffer a terrible fate but in Malaysia we give special attention to our Orang Asli community," he said at the presentation of house keys of the Orang Asli community in Bukit Lanjan here.

Dr Mahathir said the government had set up the Orang Asli Affairs Department (JHEOA) with the purpose of safeguarding the rights and future of the community as well as improving their standard of living.

"There are those who feel that the Orang Asli community should stay in the jungle, without education and without healthcare...if the life expectancy of the other communities is 70 years, then that of the Orang Asli is only 45 years, just because others feel that the way of life of the community should not be changed," he said.

Dr Mahathir said those who held such views did not realise that their ancestors once lived in caves and forests but managed to improve themselves, enabling their descendants now to enjoy the luxury of living in brick houses.

"But they don't want the same thing for the Orang Asli community in Malaysia, that is being greedy...the good they want, the bad they give to others," he said.

He said it was the intention of the government to see that the Orang Asli community in this country led a life like the other communities and was not isolated from the mainstream of development as at present.

The Prime Minister admitted that the process of integrating the Orang Asli community with the other communities in terms of development would take time but "a long time is never mind as long as they get the same rights as the other communities".

He said the government would continue to improve the standard of living of the Orang Asli community so that they could enjoy better standard of health and education, just like other Malaysians.

"To develop the Orang Asli community, we need not only allocation but also efforts...changing the way of life and culture of a person is not easy but not impossible either," he said.

Dr Mahathir also commended the Emkay Group for building 147 bungalows and terrace houses for the Orang Asli community there.

The allocation for the houses was provided by the Selangor government.

"I hope other housing developers will make similar contributions," he said.

-- BERNAMA

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