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Gurkhas

GURKHA COMMUNITY THANKS PM FOR INFRASTRUCTURE GRANT

PUTRAJAYA, Nov 29 (Bernama) -- Members of the Gurkha community who are naturalised Malaysian citizens today thanked the Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad for setting aside a grant to finance infrastructural development for their proposed settlement in Sungai Bakau in Rawang.

A delegation from the Gurkha Society of Selangor and Federal Territory conveyed their gratitude at a meeting with Dr Mahathir at the Prime Minister's Office here.

Speaking to reporters later, society president Ganes Bahadur Rana said the grant allocated by Dr Mahathir helped alleviate the community's problem of securing financing for infrastructural work at the settlement.

Ganes, who said that the society had been struggling for the past 20 years to make such a settlement a reality, however declined to disclose its quantum.

Their Sungai Bakau settlement, comprising 83 lots in an area bordering Rawang's Country Homes residential area, could accommodate about 400 Gurkhas who are naturalised Malaysians now scattered nation-wide.

The organisation's secretary Bal Bahadur Rana said it planned to turn the settlement into a tourist attraction, emulating the Portugese settlement in Melaka.

Upon completion of infrastructural work in Sungai Bakau, the society would make preparation to host a series of Gurkha festivals, including the Dashara which is celebrated in October and the Bhai Tika, observed annually three days after Deepavali, he said.

According to Ganes, Gurkhas in Malaysia now numbering about 600 were originally Gurkha servicemen from Nepal who served with British forces during the communist insurgency in Malaya then.

After the country gained independence 1957, they settled down and took up Malaysian citizenship.

" Together the Gurkha people fought for Malaysia during the emergency," he said.

Ganes said the organisation, set up in 1975, has been looking after the interest of Gurkhas in the country especially in securing housing for them.

He added that they are mostly Hindus and have preserved their culture and Nepalese as their spoken language.

-- BERNAMA

AFY AHH RYN