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`Continue working after retirement'

BANGI, Mon. - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today called on ex-servicemen and former policemen to continue working after retirement.

He said this would benefit them as they could earn some extra income besides their pensions. This would also ensure that they remained healthy.

"We must work while we still can. There are many things we can do to contribute to the country's development," Dr Mahathir said, adding that it would also help to reduce dependence on foreign labour.

He said this in his address to about 3,000 ex-servicemen and former policemen who are members of the Malaysian Ex-Servicemen Association and the Malaysian Ex-Policemen Association.

The event took place at the Universiti Tenaga Nasional.

Dr Mahathir said the Government was willing to provide training so that ex-servicemen and ex-policemen could find gainful employment that kept them busy.

"The Government is ready to help anyone who wants to progress," he said, adding that it was ready to provide the "fishing rod".

He said according to a Chinese saying, if someone came to ask for food it was better to give him a fishing rod so he could fish and eat another day.

Dr Mahathir said if the country was not progressive it would not be able to collect taxes to pay pensions and other allowances.

"The Government has proven its abilities in developing the country, and increasing salaries, allowances and pensions," he said.

Dr Mahathir also said the country was grateful to the ex-servicemen and former policemen for the sacrifices they made to keep the country safe and peaceful.

"If not for you, who carried out your duties with discipline and orderliness to defend the nation, the country would not have been able to develop.

"Malaysians cannot forget your services," he told the ex-servicemen and ex-policemen, adding that all should be thankful that the country was peaceful.

On the call for an increase in pensions, he said the Government was willing to consider the matter but it would have to be within its means.

Pointing out that it was sad to note the low income of the Malays, he said it was better for them to learn how to increase their income.

He said the number of Malays who lived in housing projects around the country was low as they could not afford the houses.

Later at a Press conference, he said the Government had identified many businesses such as sundry shops, laundries and bakeries that the Malays could venture into and increase their income.

"If they really strive, they can own not one business but can also expand to other places. By this we hope that all races will be represented in new towns," Dr Mahathir said.

He said many Malays in towns were squatters and this was not right.

"Although they are squatters, if they are willing to be trained I am confident that they too can increase their income as traders or as workers in factories."

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