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Mahathir-squatters

SQUATTERS SHOULD NOT IMPOSE VARIOUS CONDITIONS, SAYS DR MAHATHIR

PETALING JAYA, April 29 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said squatters should not impose all sorts of conditions when the government wants them to move out.

"Some are asking too much when asked to move out from an area which in the first place they have occupied illegally. But when they are offered houses, they want to buy at a low price," he said at the symbolic presentation of keys to the first 20 buyers of affordable homes at Damansara Damai new township, here today.

The Prime Minister said that if the squatters cooperated, they could own low and medium cost houses such as in Damansara Damai, complete with various facilities.

He said the government wanted Malaysia to be an attractive country and a proper life for the people.

Damansara Damai, developed by Medan Prestasi Sdn Bhd, a subsidiary of MK Land Holdings Bhd, covers 160 hectares at the junction of Jalan Sungai Buluh and the North-South Highway.

The company's target is to build and deliver 6,112 apartments by the middle of 2001.

Dr Mahathir also reminded the squatters not to be influenced by the opposition parties and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) which incited squatters not to move out.

"Usually, only 75 or 80 per cent of the squatters agree to move out while the balance refuse to do so because they are incited not to move out and to make bigger demand.

"I want to challenge the opposition and the NGOs to build houses for the squatters and to show proof that they want to help the poor. Don't be good at talking only," he said.

Speaking to reporters later, Dr Mahathir said that if the opposition and NGOs could provide cheap houses and pay compensation, they were welcomed to provide housing projects for the poor.

"I want to ask the opposition to do something for the benefit of the squatters...they are good at talking but not doing things...The country would progress more rapidly if not for such people," he said.

The Prime Minister said the government could not pay higher compensation just to satisfy a few squatters who refused to move out.

"How can we pay more to them when we have paid less to the others? This is the work of the opposition parties. I said this openly. They have nothing to do...seeking popularity this way," he said.

Dr Mahathir was also sad to see the condition of Kampung Baru, surrounded by rapid development.

"What saddened me is Kampung Baru. How long can they live like that in the middle of Kuala Lumpur? We want to develop the land but they are asking for a high price," he said.

He said the plan was to develop the land for the Malay themselves but if the price was high, it would not be economical.

"Even if they ask for the same price as the land around them, it would still be high, as much as RM1,000 per sq foot. If we were to put up buildings there, I don't think they could afford them. So, they have to be reasonable," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the government planned to develop Kampung Baru so the Malays would not seem to be living like squatters in the middle of the

city.

--BERNAMA
NZ SHS ABG