

PM takes swiipe at NGO coalition

LANGKAWI: The Prime Minister yesterday took a swiipe at the coalition of 32 non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that has put on hold all contacts with the Human Rights Commission (Suhakam) for 100 days.

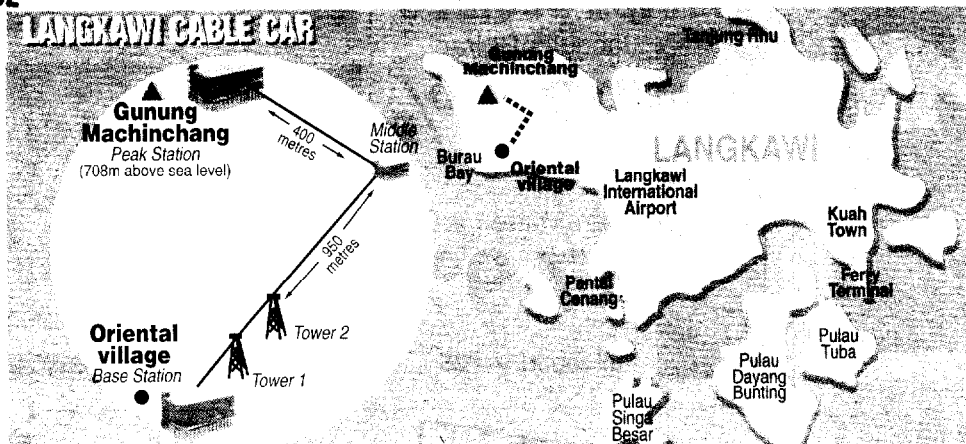
"They want to be on their own. Who cares about these NGOs? (*Dia nuk sendiri. Siapa peduli pada NGO ini*)," Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said when asked about the boycott.

The coalition had initiated the 100-day boycott in protest against what it perceives as the erosion of Suhakam's independence.

Citing the recent appointment of Tan Sri Abu Talib Othman as the new chairman and the axing of Tan Sri Anuar Zainal Abidin, Professor Mehrun Siraj and Datuk Dr Salleh Mohd Nor as commissioners as a threat to the credibility of Suhakam, the coalition said future co-operation with the commission also hung in the balance if the situation remained.

National Human Rights Association president Ramdas Tikamdas, who spoke on behalf of the coalition, had said that the NGOs would meet again at the expiry of the period to review the position.

"In the meantime, we will not have any dialogues, send any memoranda or complaints to Suhakam," Ramdas said on Saturday. Other NGOs endorsing the action include Aliran, Suaram, Jemaah Islah Malaysia, Tenaganita and Sisters in Islam.



- It will have some of the highest suspension towers in the world.
- There will be three stations - ground (for passengers to get on), middle and the peak station.
- Suspension towers placed between the middle and the top stations are expected to be 950m high.
- Cable car will travel 70m above the rainforest.
- Distance between the base station and the top of Gunung Machinchang is 2.2km.
- There will be 35 six-seater cable cars with a maximum capacity to ferry 700 passengers per hour.
- The project has a certified EIA report.
- Machinchang Range is rich in geological features, surrounded by rainforests.

Source: Project consultant Dr Peter A. Wyss

Suhakam commissioner Prof Hamdan Adnan, who represents NGOs in Suhakam, was quoted as saying that the coalition was being emotional and only had the backing of a minority of NGOs.

Dr Mahathir also took a swiipe at the Kelantan PAS government when asked about an allegation that the state had mortgaged some 50,000ha of land in Hulu Kelantan because it lacked money.

"They (PAS) said they are able to do everything if they have a government," he said after visiting several projects, including the cable car system, here yesterday.

Dr Mahathir claimed that PAS said all other governments were able to do whatever the Barisan Nasional government was capable of doing.

Gua Musang MP Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah had claimed that the Kelantan government had mortgaged the land to 40 private companies, purportedly for oil palm plantation projects.