

PM slams locals picky about jobs

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KERTIH: Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has criticised locals who shun work outside cities and major towns, warning that foreigners may end up grabbing available job opportunities if the trend continues.

The Prime Minister said jobs were abundant in areas outside big cities, such as in Kertih where Petronas' petroleum complex is located.

"We see many foreigners, including Americans here, yet the locals are not interested."

"This is the problem with locals. I fear that if we continue to be picky with jobs, the country may fall into the hands of others who are willing to come here and take over all the jobs," he told reporters after opening Petronas Petroleum Industry Complex yesterday.

He said young Malaysians should be willing to sacrifice city lifestyle to work in the

areas that utilise highly sophisticated technology.

"But most of them prefer to work in cities and towns and scorn the *kampung* lifestyle."

"It is sad that most of our young people are unaware that the development in and around Kertih is part of the big picture for national development. I must say that these values are even more required today as we strive to realise our vision to become a fully developed nation by 2020."

He said Malaysians needed to continuously pursue the cutting edge of technology to stay ahead of the trade and economic competition.

The integrated complex comprising 41 installations and supporting plants, houses many major petroleum-based manufacturing facilities.

Dr Mahathir also expressed disappointment that local entrepreneurs were not interested to relocate their businesses to this area despite the many opportunities and incentives provided

by the Government.

He said when KLIA was built, many new settlements grew around the area, provided economic and business opportunities for the people.

"When Putraiaya was built, areas around it' like Puchong and Serdang developed in tandem. Yet here, I see everything remains the same. Eateries are still stalls along roadsides and there is not much development in the surrounding areas," he added.

Earlier in his opening

speech, Dr Mahathir urged local petrol chemical industries to exploit the opportunities and incentives provided by the Government.

He said the Government through its various agencies, had made attempts to encourage and promote investment in this sector here.

"While Kertih has become a magnet capable of drawing foreign investors, local entrepreneurs are still shying away," he said.

He said local small and

medium-scale factories should move closer to Kertih to save cost, as it was cheaper to do business in the East Coast.

"The opportunities for business to exploit the downstream petro-chemical manufacturing businesses can only be limited by their own reluctance and the barriers that they put up for themselves," he added.

He said over a period of almost 20 years since Petronas was set up, Kertih had become the hub of the petroleum

industry in the peninsula.

Dr Mahathir said about RM70bil had been invested to explore, develop and produce oil and gas from shores of peninsular Malaysia.

He said the investment had resulted in huge benefits for the country, generating a revenue of RM6.6bil last year in exports and another RM2.5bil in refined petroleum products.

"Last year alone, petroleum and petro-chemical exports from Kertih amounted to RM7.9bil," he added.