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PM irked by incinerator protesters

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PUTRAJAYA, Mon. - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today hit out at residents who took turns to stage protests over the location of an incinerator.

Referring to the demonstration by residents of Broga, Semenyih, against the location of an incinerator there instead of in Puchong as proposed earlier, he said nobody seemed to agree to having an incinerator near where he or she lived.

"All of them protested. If we cannot dispose of rubbish, then we'll have to leave the rubbish generated by the people exactly where they are ...at their door steps as there is no other place to dispose of the rubbish.

"The people then cannot complain that rubbish has not been collected, because we have no place for garbage disposal ...we cannot incinerate, (obviously) cannot keep ...we cannot do anything, so we'll just leave them (rubbish) there."

Dr Mahathir made an unsolicited remark at a Press conference after recording his New Year's message in his office today.

Residents in Broga had staged a protest to demand the Government not relocate the proposed waste incinerator from Puchong to their area.

The protesters had formed the Construction of the Semenyih-Broga Incinerator Action Group, modelled after a similar group in Puchong that succeeded in getting the Government to shift the site away from their area.

Asserting that the incinerator would be more of a hazard to residents, the action group initiated a signature and postcard campaign to protest the RM1.5 billion project.

Opposition State Assemblymen in the area have also embarked on a similar campaign to capitalise on the residents' worries.

Prior to the proposed resiting to Semenyih, the incinerator was to be built in Kampung Bohol, Puchong.

However, the Ministry of Housing and Local Government gave in to residents' objections and decided to move the "high-tech" waste disposal facility to an area near Kampung Broga.

On another note, Dr Mahathir called on Malaysians to be wary of certain groups who were bent on manipulating the Government's noble efforts and policies for their narrow political benefits.

He said that this was prevalent in the issue of education, where a certain Opposition party was working overtime to discredit the Government for stopping the funding of the haphazardly-run People's Religious Schools.

"We are actually trying to prevent them (certain quarters who had hijacked the religious schools) from ruining the future of our children. These schools teach things which were actually against the true teachings of Islam ...and we don't see any reason why we should fund them when all they do is to teach the young to be ungrateful," Dr Mahathir reiterated.

On racial unity in Malaysia, Dr Mahathir said the atmosphere in which all the races came out together to celebrate the festive season was testimony to the unity enjoyed by Malaysians.

"We can see this especially in the (national) celebrations for Hari Raya Aidilfitri in Jitra and (Christmas) in Malacca. Some 200,000 people came together in peace and harmony, there was no aggression ...that is a

testimony by itself," he said.

To another question, if Barisan Nasional component party leaders should follow in his footsteps by vacating their positions for second echelon leaders in their party, Dr Mahathir said: "That's up to them, I'm not forcing everyone to follow what I do."