

10 OCT 2002

Mahathir-Citizenship

MALAYSIA MAY GRANT HONORARY CITIZENSHIP TO FOREIGNERS, SAYS MAHATHIR

SUBANG JAYA, Oct 10 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today the government may grant honorary citizenship to foreigners who wish to come and work in Malaysia.

The prime minister said this was in recognition of their contribution to the Malaysian economy.

"Many countries confer citizenships to some people who are contributing to their well-being, so we are thinking about doing the same," he told reporters after opening the 'Learning from Korea' seminar at the Sunway Convention Centre, here.

Dr Mahathir said many foreigners liked to stay in Malaysia simply because they liked the place.

Asked when the policy would be implemented, the prime minister said the government was still studying the matter.

"I don't know whether we need to have some ammendment to the law or not, but we have to make provisions," he said.

Asked if the honorary citizenship would also be given to those who contributed in non-economic fields, Dr Mahathir said the government might exercise flexibility on this.

"We can be flexible, we see whether people can do something that is good for Malaysia," he said.

Currently Malaysia allows selected foreigners to stay in this country for up to two years under the Silver Hair programme.

"Even here we do allow people to get permanent resident (status) if they invest a certain amount of money," he said, referring to the practice in some other countries.

To a question, Dr Mahathir said Malaysia's proposal to grant honorary citizenship was different from Australia's migration programme.

The government has also not thought about imposing any quota on the number of foreigners to be granted the honorary citizenship, he said.

The prime minister brought up this subject when responding to a question from the floor during a dialogue session at the seminar.

A participant had asked whether the government would be more responsive in giving permanent resident status to Korean businessmen who were interested to stay and work in Malaysia.

In his reply, Dr Mahathir said Malaysia was prepared to study individual cases and would admit people if there was merit.

"Of course we would be very grateful and be more responsive if people come in here with something to offer," he said.

Malaysia always welcomed any foreigners who wished to come here and start business together with the local people, he added.

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