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Mahathir-Squatters

STERN ACTIONS NEEDED TO RESOLVE SQUATTER ISSUES, SAYS DR MAHATHIR

KUALA LUMPUR, May 29 (Bernama) -- Stern actions are needed in tackling squatter problems in the country, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad told the FIABCI World Congress 2002 here today.

"No one likes to see the poor or seemingly poor ejected from their homes, no matter how shabby and squalid they may be.

"But, failure to clear up city squatter areas can result in serious health problems, disastrous fires, breakdowns of law and order and often riots, and mayhem," he said.

Opening the congress, Dr Mahathir expressed his amazement over how squatter settlements could double in size almost overnight, thus making them totally unmanageable to the authorities.

FIABCI is the French acronym for the International Real Estate Federation, a United Nations' accredited agency that seeks to improve the quality and competitiveness of the property industry via the sharing of knowledge, information and business opportunities at the local, national and international levels.

The prime minister said that much of the squalor of the city slums were contributed by rural migration and the influx of foreign workers.

The challenge for the governments, city planners and developers was how to provide better housing and a good environment for all, especially the poor, he said.

Dr Mahathir said that under the Eighth Malaysia Plan (2001-2005), some 615,000 houses are targeted for construction, of which 312,000 units are to be built by the public sector and the balance of 303,000 units by the private sector.

The government, he said, would continue to encourage the building of more medium-cost and low-cost houses to meet the increasing demand.

"Equal attention will be given to quality housing with all the necessary infrastructure facilities for sports, recreational and cultural activities," he said.

The prime minister said that research and development activities related to production of cheaper building materials and better construction techniques would also be promoted by the government with a view to improving the quality and safety of houses and ensuring their affordability.

"The property sector will also address a more broad-based agenda such as fulfilling the needs of the elderly and disabled, energy-efficient design and garden city concept.

"Emphasis will be given to maintenance of high-rise buildings," he added.

Delegates from 33 nations representing FIABCI member countries and non-member countries are attending the congress.

-- BERNAMA

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