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Mahathir-Squatters

SQUATTERS MUST CHANGE ATTITUDE WITH COUNTRY'S PROGRESS, SAYS DR M

JOHOR BAHRU, Feb 14 (Bernama) -- The Government in its efforts to rid squatter colonies by building orderly and comfortable homes wants to see a change in attitude and culture among squatter dwellers in line with the country's progress, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

The Prime Minister said squatters when provided with a new place to stay in an orderly area must feel proud about it and maintain the beautiful landscape and cleanliness of their residential area.

"When we move to a new and better residential area, we must be proud with our house and take care of the house and compound so that they will be always pleasant, clean and orderly," he said when speaking at a goodwill gathering in conjunction with the ground-breaking ceremony for the integrated Southern Gateway and public housing project at Bukit Cagar, here.

Dr Mahathir admitted that he hated squatters because he did not want them to remain as squatter dwellers forever but he instead want to provide a proper and orderly housing estate for squatters so that they, who are also Malaysians, could live in comfort like others.

Speaking at a media conference later, Dr Mahathir said the squatters should practise a different culture and way of living by preserving cleanliness and not throwing rubbish at their whims and fancies because if that happens the new area would be no different than their previous place.

"We want them to live in a different style... Malaysia has progressed and our people also must change in keeping with the time and with Malaysia's progress and their culture must be a culture of people who are better off," he said.

He said Malaysians now enjoyed a higher quality of life than before and squatters also worked to earn higher incomes.

"The problem is that some of them when given new places, just rent out and go back to their squatter houses," he said.

Dr Mahathir reiterated his belief that Malaysia attained the development it was enjoying now because the multi-racial Malaysians respected each other, lived in harmony and peace.

"In fact, you cannot see in other countries the religious celebrations of one race being celebrated by the other races as in Malaysia which showed a high level of tolerance.

The result of it was the growth and prosperity of the country which could be seen from the per capita income of Malaysians which in 1957 was only RM900 a year but had shot up to RM12,000 per annum now, a multi-fold increase in 43 years.

"In fact, Kuala Lumpur has also attained the level of developed area on par with developed countries... and after KL, Johor Baharu has also underwent a high degree of development," he said.

Dr Mahathir said Johor Baharu developed fast not because of its proximity to Singapore.

He said proximity to Singapore did not guarantee rapid development because there were also other countries which were near Singapore but had not developed.

Johor Baharu developed fast because the people were dynamic and bold in seizing the economic opportunities available, he said.

He hoped squatters from this city who would resettled to a more orderly housing estate would not disappoint the state government in terms of

attitude and culture in tandem with the country's fast pace of progress and time.

Earlier, in his speech, Johor Baharu Barisan Nasional (BN) chairman Datuk Shahrir Abdul Samad, said the squatters in this city was thankful to the government for its attention to provide a better place to live in.

He said about 1,000 squatter families from Kampung Tok Siak here have been relocated to better homes previously.

"It is the hope of Johor Baharu BN that the 2,600 families at the Lumba Kuda and Bukit Cagar flats, which will be demolished, will be resettled within the Johor Baharu parliamentary constituency," he said.

He praised the leadership of the federal and state governments for giving priority to public interest over business gains.

Residents of the two flats would be resettled in a nearby housing estate when the flats are demolished to pave the way for the construction of a new Customs, Immigration and Quarantine (CIQ) Complex in the heart of this city.

Shahrir said the Johor Baharu BN was grateful to the Sultan of Johor for providing the land near Bakar Batu and the adjacent land by the state government, which makes up to more than 26 hectares, to build five-storey flats with three rooms for the residents.

"It is clear that privatised projects that are well-managed, taking into account the larger interests of the people, can be implemented with big benefits to everyone," he added.

-- BERNAMA

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