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PM: Be ashamed if poverty still exists

JOHOR BARU, Fri. - Malaysians, especially those who are successful, affluent and enjoy a good standard of living, should be ashamed if there are groups within society who are still poor and live in squatter settlements, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

"I hope that one day we will be able to do away with squatters from Malaysian soil because those living in these slums are also one of us; they are also Malaysians and they have a right to live in a better environment," the Prime Minister said during the ground-breaking ceremony of the Southern Integrated Gateway project at Bukit Chagar here.

Dr Mahathir said those living as squatters should also have the will to improve themselves and discard their negative culture while adopting a new way of clean and healthy living, in tandem with the country's development and status.

"We want to get rid of all squatters. To do that we have to provide housing for them. But it often happens that when you move squatters into new housing they do not look after their new houses. If you continue with your old habits of throwing rubbish everywhere, hanging dirty clothing everywhere, then the new housing will be very much like that of squatter settlements," he said later.

"Some squatters prefer to rent out their new houses and go back to their squatter hut. That is not a practice that we are going to allow," Dr Mahathir said.

On the development of the Southern International Gateway, Dr Mahathir said the cost of the Customs, Immigration and Quarantine (CIQ) complex and the railway station would be in the range of RM1 billion.

The SIG project, which will include the CIQ complex, also comprises an elevated bridge replacing the Malaysian side of the Causeway, new interchanges and a new rail link with a swing bridge connected to the Singapore's part of rail line on the Causeway.