

Mahathir assurance for Orang Asli over land encroachment

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PUTRAJAYA, Aug 10 (Bernama) -- Two hundred and twenty Orang Asli of the Temiar community from Kelantan today met Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad and came away assured that the Prime Minister will help resolve a problem associated with their customary land.

The residents of 17 settlements in Gua Musang had come in five buses to seek Dr Mahathir's help to find a solution to the problem of their customary land being encroached by several companies and used for durian farms since Feb 18, so much so that they had to erect barricades to keep away the intruders.

Five spokesmen for the Orang Asli handed a memorandum and explained their problem to Dr Mahathir. Among them were Jaringan Kampung Wilayah Tanah Adat Pos Simpor chairman Nur Mohd Shafiq Dendi Abdullah and Association for the Protection of the Natural Heritage of Malaysia (Peka) president Puan Sri Shariffa Sabrina Syed Akil.

Nur Mohd Shafiq Dendi said that during their meeting, Dr Mahathir asked where the Orang Asli were who had come to see him and when told that they were outside the Perdana Putra building, he expressed the desire to meet all of them.

He then came out to the compound of the building and spoke with the Orang Asli.

Dr Mahathir said he sympathised with the plight of the Orang Asli who had to erect barricades to prevent their land from being encroached by outsiders who worked the land illegally.

“I listened to their problem. The Pakatan Harapan government sympathises with them and is prepared to help find a solution to the issue. I can only say that I will help them by negotiating with the Kelantan PAS government because land comes under the jurisdiction of the state government,” he said to reporters after meeting the 220 Orang Asli residents.

Dr Mahathir said the government would also look at the issue from the legal angle to find the best immediate solution to the issue that had been plaguing these residents for a long time.

“The positive sign is that Tun (Dr Mahathir) is really concerned and we can bank on the Prime Minister to help resolve the issue immediately,” said Nur Mohd Shafiq Dendi.

Shariffa Sabrina said the spirit displayed by the Prime Minister, who went to the extent of coming to the compound of the Perdana Putra building to meet the Orang Asli, boosted their confidence that the issue could be resolved.

The activist who strongly condemned illegal logging said she was confident that the Prime Minister understood the plight of the Orang Asli residents whose land had been encroached.

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