

# 'It's a mistake'

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THE Government feels it was "a mistake" to pamper Bumiputera entrepreneurs by creating a "soft environment" for them to manoeuvre in its effort to assist them to compete effectively in trade and industry, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said yesterday.

As a result, he said, many Bumiputeras have failed to maintain a competitive edge despite assistance provided to them. The level of success achieved by Bumiputeras in trade and commerce is still well below the target desired by the New Economic Policy (NEP).

It is clear the 30 per cent target of the NEP cannot be achieved when it ends in 1990.

Opening an exposition on trade and commerce in Kuala Lumpur yesterday, Datuk Seri

Dr Mahathir said it is imperative for the Government and Bumiputeras to study the reasons why the target cannot be achieved.

"We cannot blame just one side. I believe both the Government and the Bumiputeras were wrong," he said.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said for too long Bumiputera entrepreneurs have been dependent on government assistance. Rather than increase efficiency and competitiveness, many Bumiputera entrepreneurs have just gone the other way round.

"If a sick man is given a stick to support himself all the time, he will never regain the use of his limbs," the Prime Minister said. He added some just did not put in any effort and relied purely on the Government for assistance.

The economic imbalance among the three main races in Malaysia has always created "suspicion" and caused constant problems to the Government.

To overcome the problems, the Government introduced many policies to enable the Bumiputeras to catch up with the rest.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said he believed once the objectives of NEP are achieved the suspicions surrounding the various communities will be reduced greatly if not eradicated.

He said Bumiputera entrepreneurs faced a lot of problems and one area is management. Many Bumiputera ventures failed because insufficient attention was accorded to detail, including the importance of sound management.

It is not a question of lack of opportunities, location or capital. Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said despite receiving all necessary inputs, many Bumiputeras still failed.

Malaysia does not boast of a large pool of good managers. Bumiputera entrepreneurs must learn to be patient and not aggressively move into a venture without first having studied the potential well.

He said many times the question of opportunities, capital and locality do not determine the success of a venture, but good and sound management does.

Chairman of the National Chamber of Commerce and Industry Malaysian (NCCIM) Dr Nawawi Mat Awini said the NCCIM will undertake efforts to solve the problem of a peti-

tion by the American Federation of Labour-Congress of Industrial Organisations (AFL-CIO) petition to the US Congress asking the Generalised System of Preferences (GSP) privileges accorded Malaysia be withdrawn.

Dr Nawawi said NCCIM through the Asean-US Business Council will try to make some representations to help overcome the problem.

The one-week exposition is organised jointly by the Malay Chamber of Commerce and Industry Federal Territory branch (MCCIFT) and Worldwide Convention and Exposition. Sixty-six companies and government agencies are taking part in the exposition. A five-day trade seminar will also be held starting on Monday.