

Dr M: Less race tag in economy

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THE identification of race with economic function has been reduced as a result of closer co-operation between Chinese and Bumiputera businessman, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said yesterday.

Dr Mahathir said there was less discrimination in the business sector today.

"This trend is good and we hope it expands as this will enable the elimination of identification of race with economic function," he told reporters after opening the 39th MCA general assembly at Wisma MCA.

He said there were currently few Chinese family companies in the country as most had become public limited companies or partnerships with greater Bumiputera participation.

"As public limited companies, they are no longer

known as Chinese companies. This is a reflection of the enhanced co-operation in the commercial sector between Chinese businessmen and Bumiputera entrepreneurs.

"The co-operation is more meaningful as the Bumiputera partners have specific roles to play in companies owned by Chinese businessmen," he said.

He said this when asked to comment on whether there was greater Bumiputera participation in the commercial sector.

Dr Mahathir, who is Umno president and Barisan Nasional chairman, said since Bumiputeras could buy shares in these companies, they too could take an active part in their management.

"There are companies now that were originally

owned by Chinese businessmen whose ownership has been transferred to Bumiputeras although their Chinese names are retained."

For instance, he said, there were banks previously owned by Chinese but were now in the hands of Bumiputeras.

"The staff and management are the same and the name is retained."

Asked to elaborate on his speech at the opening ceremony on *Hukum Hudud Pas*, Dr Mahathir said what was preached by Pas was sometimes different from the true teachings of Islam.

"For instance, Muslims used to pray together. Now due to the influence of Pas the community is divided and Muslims pray separately and there are even instances of two *imam*.

"There are separate buri-

al grounds while marriages between some Muslims are not permitted.

"Similarly, what is claimed by Pas as *Hukum Hudud* is actually *Hukum Hudud Pas*.

On the proposal to allow Government doctors to set up private practice to boost their income, Dr Mahathir said no decision had been made on the matter.

"But the basis for the proposal is that the Government is losing doctors as it is not in a position to pay higher wages. The Government cannot and will not be able to pay the very high wages as the private sector as it has to follow specific salary schemes."

However, the Government had to think of ways of coming up with suitable wages for doctors to overcome the problem.