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Mahathir-Prosperity

ALL MALAYSIANS HAVE WIDE OPPORTUNITIES TO ACQUIRE WEALTH

KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 3 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today that all Malaysians have wide opportunities to acquire wealth in the country.

He said that all levels of society, irrespective of race or status, should be able to enjoy the country's prosperity.

The various programmes implemented in the country could be participated by all the races including the Indian community, he said.

"That special attention has not been given to Malaysian Indians does not mean that the government does not give attention at all to overcome the problems of the Malaysian Indians.

"Although there is only one minister from the Malaysian Indian community in the Cabinet, his contributions are invaluable and not confined to his ministry," he said when opening the 43rd MIC general assembly, held in conjunction with the MIC's 50th anniversary, at the Putra World Trade Centre here.

Among those present were Barisan Nasional (BN) component party leaders including MCA president Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik, Gerakan president Datuk Seri Dr Lim Keng Yaik and Pesaka Bumiputera Bersatu vice president Datuk Amar Dr Sulaiman Daud.

Dr Mahathir said that there should not be any accusations that there were lack of opportunities for the people to acquire wealth in the country.

"If we want a better life, each Malaysian should be able to replace two or three expatriates. Our income will surely also be doubled," he said.

In this respect, Dr Mahathir said that it was essential for the people to be prepared to seize all opportunities so as not to be left behind.

This is more so in this era where emphasis is on sophisticated technological development and competitive, dynamic and efficient industrial development, he added.

"While the government wish to see the Indian community forge ahead together with the other races, they should also equip themselves with knowledge and efficiency," he said.

Dr Mahathir said that the Indian community had also benefited much from the country's rapid development.

As an example, he said, the rate of poverty among the community was reduced from eight per cent in 1990 to 2.3 per cent last year when more than half (53.3 per cent) of the Indian community was categorised as average income earners, drawing between RM1,000 and RM3,000 per month.

Dr Mahathir said that the Indian community also enjoyed the highest annual growth rate in their average household income for the 1990-1995 period, recording 10.1 per cent compared with 10 per cent by the Chinese community and 9.3 per cent by the Bumiputeras.

During the same period, he said, the annual growth rate of their average corporate equity stake reached 20.6 per cent compared with 12.1 per cent for the Bumiputeras and 8.3 per cent for the Chinese community.

"The corporate equity stake acquired by the Indian community more than doubled from RM1.1 billion in 1990 to RM2.7 billion in 1995. As for the growth rate during the 1991-1995 period, the Indian community recorded the second fastest growth," he said.

Dr Mahathir said that the statistics clearly showed that the Indian community was not left behind in the mainstream of the country's development as frequently alleged.

In fact, he said, figures showed that the Indian community had benefited most from the various government programmes.

"Only as a result of its small base, a high growth still places the Indians in Malaysia at a level which is not yet unsatisfactory.

"However, a growth higher than that attained by the other races, if maintained, will enable the Malaysian Indian community to catch up with the other races," he said.

In this respect, Dr Mahathir said that the Indian community should also initiate changes and join forces with the other races in nation building.

He said that the people should understand the fact that if they place national interest above personal interest or the interest of a certain community, the interest of all the races would be eventually be met.

Dr Mahathir said that this may be a paradox but it is true that when certain races are obsessed with their own interest like in Northern Ireland and the former Yugoslavia, they achieve nothing.

"It is better to obtain half than to demand everything but gain nothing in the end...As such, we should not do anything that could jeopardise political stability or racial unity," he said.

The Prime Minister said that there is nothing more important for the nation's progress than political stability but it however did not mean that changes in policies or leadership should be denied.

"Changes could be made for as long as they are done orderly and properly, peacefully and safely. That changes are not made although it could be done does not mean that the country's political system is not healthy or undemocratic," he said.

However, he said that changes made merely for the sake of change would not only be wasteful but also unproductive.

It also did not mean that democracy had been practised, he added.

-- BERNAMA

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