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MITI TO INTRODUCE PROGRAMMES TO CREATE MORE MIDDLE INCOME BUMIS

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 28 (Bernama) -- International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz said today the ministry would introduce linkage programmes for Bumiputeras in the small and medium scale industries (SMIs) in order to meet the objectives of the Second Industrial Master Plan (IMP2) in terms of producing more middle income Bumiputeras,

Speaking to reporters after the launch of IMP2 by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, she said the intra-industry and inter-industry programmes would focus on development of SMIs wholly-owned by Bumiputeras or in joint venture.

The programmes would be carried out by identifying the Bumiputeras and Bumiputera enterprises, she added.

She said: "We would like to see Bumiputera involvement in a cross-section of industry, including areas where they have never penetrated such as the precision component industry and not on certain industries only."

Rafidah hoped more middle income Bumiputera could be produced through the programmes which would be carried out in line with the cluster development programme.

She said, however, no figures would be set for the target; the ministry would like to see their participation in terms of sectors.

Meanwhile, Permodalan Nasional Bhd, the leading trust fund institution for Bumiputera in the country, believes that it would see a lot of investment opportunities in the years to come, especially with more policies and programmes set in place in the IMP2 to further develop and integrate SMIs.

Its deputy chief executive Hamad Kama Piah Che Othman said: "We should be more aggressive from now especially when the Prime Minister wants us to play an active role in creating more middle class Bumiputera businessmen."

Asked whether PNB would come out with new guidelines in line with the IMP2, he said: "There is no real guideline... we will still use the old one but we will make sure that there must be good returns in any investment we make, especially when it involves other people's money."

The IMP2's emphasis on assisting SMIs would be to develop a strategy of promoting production efficiency and consolidate, strengthen and extend the outreach of existing SMI programmes.

"The IMP2 is a very good long-term plan that will see the country's formation into an industrialised nation towards the year 2000," he added.

Hamad Kama said based on his experience, it was evident that more concerted efforts would be required to garner and sustain the effective participation of both the public and private sectors.

"Strong leadership will also be necessary to sustain the drive and to muster the necessary resources to achieve further transformation of the manufacturing sector," he added.

Asian Strategy and Leadership Institute director Tan Sri Ramon Navaratnam welcomed the idea of creating more middle income Bumiputera.

He hoped the policies towards that strategy would be announced soon so that the private sector would not have to guess what was coming.

"It is something which begs the question "What next?" he said.

Until such policies were made public, there would be uncertainty as to how such strategies would take shape.

In his speech, Dr Mahathri said he would not elaborate on how the

creation of more middle-income Bumiputeras would be done "but we know that this can be done.

"We crave your support and indulgence in this. It will be good for everyone and especially for the business community, for if you look around, you will appreciate the value of strong committed governments which do not spring surprises on you." -- BERNAMA

SHY LDB