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Call to increase middle-class Bumis

KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. - The Umno supreme council wants State Governments to increase the number of middle-class Bumiputeras by providing more business opportunities such as in franchising and management training.

Speaking after chairing the supreme council meeting tonight, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said this was because the number of middle-class Bumiputeras involved in business and industry was still small compared to wage earners.

He said although the Government had been successful in providing job opportunities for Bumiputeras in the lower income bracket as well as in developing corporate leaders, this was not the case in the middle class.

He said the lack of middle-class Bumiputeras was reflected in the poor response in the purchase of medium-cost houses between RM50,000 and RM300,000 although discounts were given.

Currently, he said, these people could not afford to buy or rent such houses.

"We urged the State Governments to take action to establish more middle-class Bumiputeras," he said.

Dr Mahathir, who is Umno president, said it was difficult for the middle-class Bumiputeras to boost their income if they were only wage earners.

Asked on the role of the Federal Government in this matter, he said the Cabinet had already agreed that there was a need to focus on efforts similar to those to be undertaken by the State Governments.

On whether the council had set any target or time-frame to see an increase in the number of middle-class Bumiputeras, he said: "There is no target but we just want to see more of them so that when there are medium-cost houses on sale, Bumiputeras will be able to buy or rent the property."

The council also discussed the social ills plaguing society and measures to address the matter.

Dr Mahathir said that a comprehensive study of the problems would be carried out aimed at finding solutions, adding that these had been classified into five specific areas.

These are parents who have failed to raise their children properly; problems faced by teachers in instilling their pupils with positive values; the role and responsibility of the Government; the media; and community leaders, including eminent personalities who should become role models for children.

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