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Programmes for the poor to go on

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SHAH ALAM, Sun - Efforts to increase the number of middle-class Bumiputera have not affected the Government's programmes for the poor and hardcore poor and rural folk.

Economic adviser to the Government Tun Daim Zainuddin said these programmes had not been affected in terms of commitment or funds, but would now be in tandem with programmes for the low and lower-middle income groups.

"In short, the duty and responsibility of the Government and its implementing agencies will now be heavier," he said in his keynote address at "Konvensyen Perdana Usahawan Menengah Melayu" organised by Umno Youth's economic and entrepreneur development councils.

Daim said there was still a shortage of middle-class Malay entrepreneurs. He added that this concern was voiced by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad recently.

He said at present the Government had put middle income at between RM1,000 and RM3,000 a month but it would revise the figure to between RM5,000 and RM10,000 by the year 2000.

Daim said the Government's strategy to increase middle-class Bumiputera was to increase the number of mid-level Bumiputera entrepreneurs and professionals.

"To be successful in business, we must be truly interested in it and give all our time to it. We cannot have one foot in business and the other elsewhere. We must also gather knowledge and learn from others," he said.

Daim said one must not be disheartened by failures along the way and give in easily.

"As for industries that Bumiputra entrepreneurs can go into, in my opinion, we should go into new industries or industries where we are at an advantage," he said, adding that involvement in new industries was important as there would not be too much competition. Progress may be easier.

Daim said the Government had identified the new industries as aerospace, information technology and computers, telecommunications, and engineering and had included these in the Seventh Malaysia Plan.

He said more Bumiputeras must have the proper background and professional qualifications to elevate their competitive edge in the open market.

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