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Indian businessmen welcome PM's pledge of assistance

JOHOR BARU, Sun. - The Johor Indian Business Association today welcomed the Prime Minister's assurance that the needs of all Malaysians would be taken care of during these difficult times.

Jiba president P. Sivakumar said Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's pledge that the Government was taking measures to ensure all received assistance was also very gratifying.

He said such commitment by the country's top leadership was a clear testimony that the Government had the interest and well-being of all Malaysians at heart.

"This is the best manifestation of a good Government," he said, adding that it was very heart-warming to know the Government recognised that all sections of the population had been hit hard by the economic problems.

Sivakumar was commenting on the Prime Minister's speech in Kuala Lumpur yesterday in conjunction with the 76th birthday of the Yang di-Pertuan Agong Tuanku Ja'afar.

Among others, Dr Mahathir had assured Malaysians that no one would be neglected or their problems glossed over by the Government during the current economic situation.

He also said everyone, from unemployed workers and traders to small and big entrepreneurs, would receive assistance or have their burdens eased as the situation was not of their own making.

Sivakumar said Jiba, a non-governmental organisation dedicated to helping Indian businessmen in Johor, appreciated the Government's commitment and pledge of assistance.

Jiba provides managerial and technical support to Indian businesses, and is involved in skills training, and joint ventures with Bumiputera and Chinese enterprises. It also part of a transport consortium.

Sivakumar said one sector of the economy badly in need of government support and assistance was the transport industry. Small independent lorry operators are among the worst hit by the slowdown.

"Hundreds of lorry operators have lost their vehicles to banks and finance companies for defaulting on their mortgage payments. Jiba appeals to the Prime Minister to work out a moratorium with the financial institutions to allow the lorry operators to pay only interest on their loans for six months, until the situation improves.

"Without government intervention, more operators will have to close shop and this will affect the economy even further."

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