

29 MAY 1998

Mahathir-Bumiputera

NO DISCRIMINATION IN ASSISTANCE TO BUMIPUTERA COMPANIES

TUMPAT, May 29 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today that the government will continue to provide assistance to Bumiputera companies facing problems during the economic crisis.

He gave an assurance that the government would not discriminate between big and small Bumiputera companies.

"If companies of the Bumiputeras including the Malays are allowed to wind up, we will return to the situation before the New Economic Policy was introduced when the Malays were poor," he said when opening the Kelantan Multimedia, Telecommunications and Electronics Exposition (Emtek '98) at Sekolah Menengah Chabang Empat here.

Dr Mahathir said that government assistance was provided to reduce the huge disparity of wealth between the Bumiputeras and non-Bumiputeras in the country.

"We don't want to see the Malays so poor while the rich are the non-Bumiputeras," he said.

"We are not envious of them and in fact provide them assistance to become millionaires or billionaires and we are even more proud if they can afford to own aircraft, ships and other things," he said.

Dr Mahathir said that the government would not allow the views of outsiders to thwart its efforts to assist the Bumiputeras to achieve greater progress.

"Some outsiders even stated that the rich are cronies of the leaders," the prime minister said.

He said that the outsiders resorted to such action because they want to see the Malays remain poor.

"We will continue to assist the Bumiputeras even though there are outsiders out to frustrate our efforts," he said.

As such, Dr Mahathir said that the government and the people should be alert against a new form of foreign domination, through the multimedia onslaught.

He said that the people should take heed of the recent developments in Indonesia which was formerly regarded as a world economic tiger but whose economy had collapsed, caused by outsiders.

The prime minister also called on the people including those in the rural areas to acquaint themselves and try to acquire adequate knowledge in the information technology (IT) field in line with the government's efforts to promote IT in the country.

He said that a good knowledge of IT would enable the people to withstand attempts by outsiders to undermine the country through the multimedia onslaught.

"This technology which provides us access to borderless communication can help us turn the country into a strong and progressive nation," he said.

Former Deputy Prime Minister Tun Ghafar Baba, Rural Development Minister Datuk Annuar Musa, Gua Musang Member of Parliament Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah and Dewan Negara President Tan Sri Mohamed Yaacob were among those present.

For Dr Mahathir, accompanied by his wife, Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamed Ali, it was his first appearance in public after he underwent an operation to remove a blood clot in his left ankle on May 16.

During a tour of the exposition, the prime minister held a

teleconferencing with 13-year-old Samihah Suradin, a patient in the Intensive Care Unit of the Universiti Sains Malaysia Hospital in Kubang Kerian, about 25 kilometres from here.

She was hospitalised four years ago since she was paralysed from the neck down because of encephalomyelitis, a brain and spinal cord infection.

The exposition, the first held in Kelantan, is participated by about 40 multimedia companies in the country.

The six-day exposition is organised by the Pasir Mas Foundation and Telekom Malaysia Berhad, the main sponsor.

Earlier, Dr Mahathir and Dr Siti Hasmah were met on arrival at the Sultan Ismail Petra Airport in Pengkalan Chepa by Umno and Barisan Nasional leaders including Annuar, who is the deputy chairman of the Kelantan Umno Liaison Committee and Entrepreneur Development Minister Datuk Mustapa Mohamad, who is the Kelantan BN vice chairman.

They were accorded a colourful traditional welcome at the exposition grounds.

After the opening ceremony, the prime minister left for the residence of Pasir Mas Umno Division head, Datuk Ibrahim Ali at Taman Mimi in Wakaf Baru for lunch.

Dr Mahathir performed Friday prayers at the Wakaf Bharu Mosque before leaving for Kuala Lumpur.

-- BERNAMA

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