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Mahathir-Bumiputera

NO PROPOSAL TO HAVE A BUMIPUTERA ECONOMIC CONGRESS- DR MAHATHIR

KUALA LUMPUR, March 24 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today the government has no proposal to have a Bumiputera Economic Congress after having set up the National Economic Action Council (NEAC).

"Nevertheless the government will ensure that Bumiputera interests are championed and defended," he said during Question Time in the Dewan Rakyat.

He said efforts to continue with programmes to reduce poverty, expand small and medium scale industries and education which mostly involved Bumiputeras were proof of the government's commitment in this matter of protecting Bumiputera interests.

"However as a pragmatic government, we also do realise that programmes to help Bumiputeras very much required rapid economic expansion," he said.

Hence the government had to take measures to speed up national economic expansion even though it might be viewed as creating a loss to Bumiputeras in the short run.

This matter should be viewed in the long term context when Bumiputeras would reap the benefits of economic expansion, the Prime Minister said.

Dr Mahathir also said the NEAC set up by the government to monitor and handle the national economic problems would exist until the country attained full economic recovery.

He noted a positive change in the national economic situation with signs that the economy was becoming stronger and more stable.

"The KLSE Composit Index and the ringgit's exchange rate are not only higher but have not experienced the ups and downs common in the past," he said.

To a question as to whether the government proposed to cut the salaries of ministers, deputy ministers and parliamentary secretaries by between 30 and 50 per cent, Dr Mahathir said the government had no such plans.

He also said the government did not have the power to reduce the salaries of top corporate officials.

"Such decisions rest with the companies concerned," he added. --

BERNAMA

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