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#### Call to increase Bumi role in retail sector

BUMIPUTERA involvement in the retail sector is still relatively low and efforts must be made to improve the situation, Malay Chamber of Commerce Malaysia president Tan Sri Tajudin Ramli said yesterday.

Less than 10 per cent of retailers are Bumiputera and Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had expressed concern on this.

"In view of this, the chamber is working closely with the Entrepreneur Development Ministry on finding ways to increase the number of Bumiputera retailers in the country," Tajudin said.

He was speaking to reporters after presenting the chamber's education aid to 26 students from 25 schools in Terengganu. The students will receive RM920 each from the Terengganu Malay Chamber of Commerce and its members.

Also present were Malay Chamber of Commerce Malaysia deputy president Datuk Abdul Rahman Maidin, who is the executive chairman of Malaysia Resources Corporation Berhad and Terengganu Malay Chamber of Commerce president Wan Mohamad Albakri Wan Mohd Nor.

Tajudin advised Bumiputera retailers to be more serious in carrying out their operations.

"From my observation, not many Bumiputera retailers are serious in their business.

"At small towns or at the villages, for instance, the retailers will close shops when they feel like it and when they have to go for holidays. This should not have happened," he said.

He said the low number of retailers among the Bumiputera might be caused by insufficient number of retail outlets or high rent of existing outlets.

"In this regard, we are also discussing this matter with the Entrepreneur Development Ministry to find ways to provide retailers with outlets that are affordable and reasonable."

Asked on the impact of the merging exercise among the financial institutions on the Bumiputera entrepreneurs, Tajudin said so far there were no adverse effects.

Based on close monitorings by the Chamber, he said, funds were still available for the entrepreneurs to borrow from the banks and the loan approval process was being carried out.

"So far we have not received any complaints from our members claiming that it is hard to secure loans from the bank after the merging exercise.

"Nonetheless, the chamber will continue to monitor the situation closely."

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