

08/05/1999

DPM: Indian community has achieved highest growth rate

PENANG, Fri. - The Indian community was found to have achieved the highest growth rate in the country, according to the mid-term review report of the Seventh Malaysia Plan.

Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said the success of the Indian community was so astounding that even MIC president Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu could not believe it, when the report was tabled in the Cabinet.

"Samy Vellu was so shocked that he even disputed the accuracy of the report, so much so that Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had to urge him not to have such a low opinion of the community, because it was a fact that they are doing well," Abdullah said tonight.

He said a factor that helped pull up the community's performance rating was the substantial number of professionals among them, especially in the field of medicine and law.

He, however, did not provide statistics of the growth rate of the community.

Abdullah said however that it could not be denied that there were also many poor people in the Indian community, and gave the assurance that the Government would continue to give attention to improving their lot.

He was speaking at a dinner to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the Malaysian Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (Penang branch) at the Bayview Beach Hotel here.

Present were Chief Minister Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon, Malaysian Associated Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry president Senator V.K.K. Teagarajan and Penang MICCI president Datuk Markend Joshi.

Also present were State Assembly Speaker Datuk Yahaya Abdul Hamid, several State exco members, and leaders of the other chambers of commerce.

Earlier, Koh who surprised journalists by sitting through the whole affair, confessed that he was not there because he was confident of his "political future" by retaining the Gerakan State party chairman's post in the state party election tomorrow. He said he was there as he had promised to be present.

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