

15 JUN 1999
Indians-Memo
INDIAN WORKERS SUBMITS MEMO TO PM

KUALA LUMPUR, June 15 (Bernama) -- Thirty-six non-governmental organisations claiming to represent some half a million Indian workers throughout the country today handed over a memorandum to the prime minister disputing data on progress made by the community in the mid-term review of the Seventh Malaysia Plan.

The memorandum called on the government to review the data which they described as unrealistic and questionable.

It was accepted on behalf of Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad by Mohamed Shafiq Abdullah, his assistant special functions officer.

A spokesman of the group, K. Arumugam, told reporters that studies by various groups showed that the majority of Malaysian Indians were still in the working class category and occupying low paying jobs in the government and private sector.

But the mid-term report put the monthly household incomes for the Indians in the urban and rural sector in 1997 at RM3,289 and RM2,019 respectively, with an annual growth rate of 16.4 per cent and 16.5 per cent respectively between 1996 and 1997, the highest among the three major ethnic groups, he said.

Arumugam said it indicated that the household income of Indians was consistently higher than that of the Bumiputeras up to 1997 with the annual growth rate of urban Indian household at 24 per cent higher than the urban Bumiputera and 20 per cent higher than urban Chinese.

"The information implies that the Indian households are earning more than the national average for all ethnic groups and are performing exceptionally well both in the rural and urban sector. We content that the information does not reflect the present reality of the Malaysian Indians, and the majority of the Indians are still in the working class, earning low wages," he said.

"Based on our analysis, the mid-term report must be reviewed in order that the poverty of the Malaysian Indians and other minorities be addressed in the development programmes for poverty eradication and restructuring of the society," he said.

The group also urged the prime minister to clarify the report and make clear the government's position in addressing the needs of the working class Malaysian Indians and other minorities.

-- BERNAMA

YBK RM