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MUSTAPA-BUMIPUTERA

MINISTRY, DPMM TO ENHANCE BUMI'S INVOLVEMENT IN RETAIL SECTOR

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 10 (Bernama) -- The Ministry of Entrepreneur Development and the Malay Chamber of Commerce, Malaysia (DPMM) will step up moves to increase the involvement of Bumiputera in the retail sector.

Entrepreneur Development Minister Datuk Mustapa Mohamed said this was important as Bumiputera's involvement in the sector was at the lowest level, especially in major towns.

"We will study what is making it difficult for them to be involved in this sector, and with this we hope more Bumiputera would be involved in the retail sector in major towns, especially in shopping complexes," he said.

Mustapa said this at a press conference after the opening of the Fourth Bumiputera Economic Congress (KEB-4) by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

The congress was entitled "Challenges of the New Millennium."

Also present was DPMM president Tan Sri Tajudin Ramli.

Earlier, in a dialogue session with Bumiputera entrepreneurs, the Prime Minister expressed his disappointment at the lacklustre response shown by Bumiputera entrepreneurs on the retail sector.

"We have found out that Bumiputeras are not interested and they feel that this sector is not able to provide them with big profits. And often, when they enter this sector, they fail," Dr Mahathir said.

As such, he hoped that the relevant parties would identify the problems faced by the Bumiputeras, and gave an assurance that the government would do its best to obtain accurate information and feedback.

Mustapa also touched on the Prime Minister's suggestion that a thorough study be held on the effects of the economic downturn on Bumiputera entrepreneurs.

"The ministry, DPMM and Universti Malaya have conducted this study last year. We would continue to update all the data available, we would come out with a framework so that Bumiputeras would be prepared to face future challenges," he said.

Asked whether there was a possibility that KEB-4, which was launched today, would propose a specific policy to protect Bumiputera's interests in facing the pressure of globalisation, he said:

"I do not want any assumptions (made), but through discussions held before this, I am confident that this issue would be brought up. We have to wait first whether or not the issue would be a congress' resolution," he said.

He also said that Bumiputeras would not be able to enjoy their success now without the government's involvement.

"Today, we have been given an assurance that the Barisan Nasional's government would continue to help Bumiputera. This is something which is a relief, as in facing the new millennium, we are still weak in various other fields, especially in the accounting sector," Mustapa said.

With the government's continuous policy, Mustapa was confident that the country's resources would be equally distributed. -- BERNAMA

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