

11/09/1999

`Understand Malaysia Inc fully' (HL)

Ramlan Said; Abdul Razak Ahmad

KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. - Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said he would instruct the Chief Secretary to the Government, Tan Sri Abdul Halim Ali, to ensure all civil servants understand fully and carry out the Malaysia Incorporated concept effectively.

The Prime Minister said more dialogues needed to be held between Government servants, especially mid-level officers, and businessmen to promote a better understanding of the concept so that it would produce the desired results.

Dr Mahathir said this when responding to points raised by a businessman at the 4th Bumiputera Economic Congress here. Some Bumiputera entrepreneurs felt that they faced difficulties when seeking assistance from civil servants, especially with those in the mid-level category.

While senior officers appeared to be more forthcoming with assistance, the mid-level ones were sometimes less helpful.

The Prime Minister said some civil servants had yet to fully grasp the objectives of the concept. Many did not realise that the Government had a "stake" in every business as it would collect 28 per cent in tax from profits of companies, he said.

"Therefore, we would like to see all businesses succeed because we will also gain from them. It becomes our responsibility to make any business a success," he said at the dialogue.

Malaysia Inc is a concept where the public and private sectors work as partners in order to facilitate the economic development of the country in which both have a stake.

Dr Mahathir said senior Government officers would be instructed to explain the concept to all their subordinates - not once but repeatedly. They should be told that the Government obtains substantial income from corporate taxes which are also spent on paying salaries of civil servants.

More than 1,300 participants - from traders to captains of industries - are attending the two-day congress at the Putra World Trade Centre.

In his opening speech, the Prime Minister assured the Bumiputera business community that the Government would continue to provide assistance to Bumiputera businessmen until they were strong enough to compete with others.

But they should do away with unhealthy business culture and practices.

He said Bumiputera businessmen must cultivate a culture of work that would enable them to overcome challenges and competition in the business world. Competition exists not only among the Bumiputera community but also from other business communities in and outside the country.

Dr Mahathir said the deliberations and resolutions of the congress would be noted, and those that could be implemented would be carried out by the Government.

He said he was making the promise as the Prime Minister and in jest said that he could only fulfil the pledge if he remained in the post after the general elections, a remark that was greeted by applause from the audience.

After 42 years of independence, Dr Mahathir said many agreed that the Bumiputeras were still lagging behind in many fields compared to other races in the country.

Many also agreed that as long as the gap was not reduced, unity and racial harmony could not be fully achieved, and the belief was further

strengthened with lessons learnt from a neighbouring country where riots occurred caused by economic imbalance.

"Even the non-Bumiputeras now understand and accept the need to improve the lot of the Bumiputeras. The opposition is coming from foreigners as they see the policy as preventing them from coming in and taking control of the economy."

He stressed that the Government's policies on Bumiputeras were not aimed at robbing the wealth of other races but to expand the economic pie so that everyone would benefit.