

13/11/2000

Mara to produce 50 entrepreneurs per district by 2005

KUALA LUMPUR, Sun. - Majlis Amanah Rakyat (Mara) has been given the task of developing more programmes to produce 50 young entrepreneurs in every district nationwide by 2005.

Mara deputy director-general (entrepreneur) Zamani Mohd Noor said today the agency would be looking for those from the manufacturing, services and commercial sectors under the initiative.

"While this is not going to be easy, it is not impossible to reach the target as there are programmes catered for this," he said today.

He added that the programmes consisted of skills training, sponsorship and helping entrepreneurs to market their products.

"We hope these young entrepreneurs will be able to sustain their business and then help others to attain similar success," he said.

Mara has given out RM1.2 billion in loans to produce 120,000 entrepreneurs since 1951, when the Rural and Industrial Development Authority was established.

Asked whether there was a special allocation for the programme, Zamani said: "There was no need as the existing allocation was sufficient."

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad recently expressed his disappointment in Malays whose achievements had fallen short of the Government's efforts to assist them.

He said Mara was still relevant and was confident it could achieve better results. Rida, the forerunner of Mara, was set up to improve rural living standards.

Earlier, Zamani opened a two-week exhibition on the history of Rida-Mara on behalf of Entrepreneur Development Minister Datuk Seri Nazri Abdul Aziz at National Museum.

Deputy Information Minister Datuk Khalid Yunus, who was one of the panelists for the event's historical seminar, said the Malays should always remember the role played by Rida-Mara and its contribution towards the development of the community.

He said although various efforts had been taken to elevate the status of Malay entrepreneurs, many still lacked the knowledge and skill in various fields especially commerce.

He expressed hope the Malays would learn from the difficulties faced by their forefathers and intensify efforts to sustain themselves in the corporate world.

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