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Umno needs to do more for bumiputras, says Dr M

BUKIT MERTA JAM, Fri: Umno needs to do more for the bumiputras who have yet to make inroads in the country's economic scenario, Prime Minister and Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

He said though the struggles for the country have paid off in terms of development, this has yet to materialise for bumiputras even through the New Economic Policy.

More needs to be done to alleviate poverty among the bumiputras and to realise the 30% quota set for them.

Mahathir also lamented that even in the religious aspects, inroads made by Umno have not been satisfactory, with the Opposition doing much harm and continuing to exploit religion for political mileage.

He said this at Seberang Perai Politeknik in Permatang Pauh at the end of his two-day visit to Penang.

Earlier, he held a two-hour closed door briefing with Permatang Pauh and Bukit Mertajam Umno divisions, and also joined 3,000 for tea.

Asked about the visit, Mahathir expressed satisfaction with the overwhelming response shown by both Barisan Nasional and Umno members.

"Even in Permatang Pauh (the stronghold of former deputy prime minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim), I see a change in response and attitude of the people," he said.

"I also visited the Umno Youth operations room and what is clear is that the response and interest are good.

"Similarly, in other places, I have seen the change in attitude and interest to continue with the Umno and BN struggles. This is a strong mandate for the future of Umno and BN ... I am satisfied."

Mahathir said Umno and BN members were now much more committed. He expressed confidence that their attitude had changed.

He advised Permatang Pauh leaders to put aside their differences and to focus on the struggles to achieve Umno's goals.

Present was Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.