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Koh-Action

DR KOH PROPOSES AFFIRMATIVE ACTION BASED ON NEED AND MERIT

PETALING JAYA, July 29 (Bernama) -- Gerakan vice-president Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon today suggested that current affirmative action based on race must be changed to that on need and merit.

He said those who work hard should be rewarded so that they would work harder but at the same time the poor, the backward and the handicapped should also be helped irrespective of their races.

The country needs meritocracy to face an increasingly competitive and hostile world especially with the implementation of World Trade Organisation (WTO) and Asean Free Trade Area (AFTA) regulations which would open up trade barriers between countries, he said when speaking at the Selangor Gerakan delegates' conference here.

"This is because we need a growing economic cake so that all the races will always have a bigger share and will not fight among ourselves to take other people's shares," he said.

Speaking to reporters later, Dr Koh, who is Penang Chief Minister, said the meritocracy proposal was not something new as it was proposed by the party 12 years ago.

"We also brought the proposal to the First National Economic Consultative Council and was accepted in principle as part of the Vision 2020 objectives but was never implemented," he said.

Dr Koh said the Gerakan's proposal was not like the cold-blooded meritocracy practised in certain countries which only supported high achievers and neglected others.

In responding to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's call to implement meritocracy in student intake to public universities, he said university entries based on merit did not mean the needy would be left out.

"It will take into account a lot of other things like the academic achievements, family background, study interest and not just based on race alone," he said.

He said the party would again bring up the proposed changes to the federal government but gave not deadline for it.

Dr Mahathir had on Friday expressed frustration over poor academic results by majority of Malay students despite favoured treatment and had threatened to remove privileges if they do not buck up.

-- BERNAMA

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