

24 MAR 2001

Mahathir-Bumiputera

GOVT STRIVING TO REMOVE RACIAL IDENTIFICATION BY ECONOMIC FUNCTION

KOTA KINABALU, March 24 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the government will continue striving to remove racial identification by a community's economic function.

Towards this end, it will assist the Bumiputera in acquiring business skills and in attaining economic parity with the other communities, he said.

However, for such efforts to succeed, the Bumiputera themselves would have to change their attitude and work harder, he said when opening the 2001 Sabah Bumiputera economic congress here today.

"There can never be a larger Bumiputera equity holding if everytime shares are allocated to them, they would immediately sell them to non-Bumiputera for quick profit," he said.

They should instead emulate those non-Bumiputera who prudently managed their business and finances, said the prime minister.

Dr Mahathir said the current level of Bumiputera achievement, economy-wise, was still low at only 19 per cent despite the various government policies, efforts and priority accorded them.

"The government has been criticised for cronyism, unfairness and has been slandered and defamed purely for wanting to help Bumiputera get their share of the national economic cake," he said.

Criticising the government would just be futile if the objective of redressing economic disparity between the Bumiputera and non-Bumiputera could not be achieved, said Dr Mahathir.

"It cannot be achieved and can never be achieved if the real ailment inherent among the Bumiputera themselves is not cured," he said.

Dr Mahathir reminded Bumiputera businessmen against actingly hastily in doing business.

The prime minister assured Bumiputera, including those in Sabah, that the government would not neglect its responsibility towards them.

Among the measures it would implement in continuing assistance for them are:

- * giving Sabah Bumiputera businessmen priority when awarding government contracts provided the contracts are not in turn given to non-Bumiputera contractors.

- + intensifying programmes under the commercial and industrial development programme for Sabah Bumiputera, including women;

- + increasing the number of training institutions for young Sabah entrepreneurs through collaboration between the ministries of Education and Entrepreneur Development.

- + introducing short-term and long-term courses for entrepreneurs in Sabah by Universiti Malaysia Sabah and Universiti Teknologi Mara catering mainly for retiring government and private sector personnel keen on starting small- and medium-scale industries, (SMIs).

The Entrepreneur Development Ministry would conduct a study in major towns in Sabah with a view towards increasing the number of Bumiputera retail traders, the prime minister said.

The government would also expand the mentor, vendor and franchiser concept in Sabah to enlarge Bumiputera participation in manufacturing and production of electrical, electronic, plastic and furniture products as well as in the petroleum, energy and telecommunication sectors, he said.

The state Industrial Development Ministry and the federal Foreign and

International Trade and Industry ministries would be aggressively speed up the development of the Brunei,Indonesia,Malaysia, the Philippines-East Asean Growth Area (BIMP-EAGA) to open new markets for local Bumiputera entrepreneurs.

More than 800 participants are taking part in the two-day seminar organised by the Sabah Economic Development Corporation.

-- BERNAMA
HAK MAI RYN