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Mahathir-Towns

GOVT CREATING SIGNIFICANT MALAY BUSINESS PRESENCE IN NEW TOWNSHIPS

ALOR SETAR, July 26 (Bernama) -- The Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the government is striving to bring about significant Malay ownership of commercial premises and business operations in new townships although this is not an easy task.

The government envisaged ownership of urban commercial space by all Malaysian communities to reflect fair distribution of wealth, he said when opening the general meeting of Koperasi Pekan Rabu Berhad here today.

He was convinced that racial jealousies could be minimised if traders from all the communities do business together in new townships.

The domination of mercantile activities in new townships by only one particular community, as being the case presently, was unhealthy for a multi-racial country like Malaysia, he said.

Populating new townships with a significant Malay mercantile sector had never been easy given their level of business which did not merit operating in concrete urban commercial premises, let alone owning them, he said.

He said the Malays prefer to do business at street-side stalls and this attitude has to change by cultivating higher business ability.

"The Malays should graduate from the road-side and do business in orderly concrete structures. With perseverance and good financial management we can succeed.

"It saddens me that many Malays failed in business since the New Economic Policy was introduced 30 years ago. For this reason, the government then introduced them to the franchise method," he said.

In light of the proposed construction of the RM13-million Che Det Mall and Che Det Walk at Pekan Rabu, Dr Mahathir urged the traders there to change their mindset and keep abreast with Pekan Rabu's progress.

(The prime minister, who was once a petty-trader in Pekan Rabu, is fondly referred to by his nickname Che Det).

"I hope the place is always kept clean, the environment pleasant and the traders decently dressed. Only then can we be like Bintang Walk in the federal capital," he said.

He said there was no approval yet for the use of his nickname Che Det for both the facilities and that he was never consulted first over it.

"No approval has been given yet for the use of my name and no one bothered to ask me first. I am not sure how it will turn out to be. I fear that PAS people may not come," he said in lighter vein.

Dr Mahathir also caused laughter among the delegates and guests when he produced a blue envelope containing allowance for attending the meeting.

"The one opening this meeting is merely a member. As a member of the cooperative, I get a RM30-allowance for being present," he said.

Pekan Rabu is synonymous with the prime minister who, during his teens, sold banana fritters and fire-wood there 58 years ago.

-- BERNAMA

MAN NMO RYN