

29/08/2001

`No ethnic divide in business'

Ramlan Said

KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. - Businesses should not be divided along ethnic lines although the country is a multi-racial society, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said tonight.

He said having businesses which had the participation of various races did not mean the interest of any particular group would be affected.

"What's important is for all races in Malaysia to benefit from the economy," he said at the Malaysian Associated Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry golden jubilee dinner at the Palace of the Golden Horses.

Dr Mahathir also presented souvenirs to several ex-MAICCI presidents.

Among those present were Datuk Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali, Works Minister Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu, Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Deputy Minister Datuk S. Subramaniam and MAICCI president Datuk K. Kenneth Eswaran.

At present, Indian businesses are largely concentrated in the retail, distribution, catering and construction sectors. Most of these are to meet the demand and fulfil the interests of the community.

"MAICCI members should diversify into other areas like industrial and services as well as in new fields like biotechnology, machinery and engineering, packaging and multi-media."

In view of the limited size of the domestic market, Dr Mahathir felt there was a need to create networks and collaborations with foreign companies, chiefly to gain new technologies and markets from them.

"Indian businessmen should also accept the challenge to restructure their organisations and business culture to meet changes brought about by the advent of the information technology world."

To ensure the community remained resilient in the future, more projects should be undertaken to uplift the living standard of Indians.

Consortiums can be established through mergers and takeovers of smaller companies which will benefit from the enlarged operations, be it locally or abroad.

In championing the interests of their own race, Dr Mahathir reminded all quarters the importance of giving greater emphasis and commitment to national integration.

"Only through national integration can the wishes of all races here to live in peace and harmony, and to achieve development, can be attained."

The Prime Minister said efforts towards national unity must be carried out continuously and at all levels - in schools, working places, housing estates, in sports and others.

"We must be wary of elements bent on disrupting peace and the harmonious atmosphere in the country.

"We cannot compromise on this matter."