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## New moves to benefit Sabah Bumis

Nuraina A. Samad

KOTA KINABALU, Sat. - The Bumiputera communities in Sabah whose economic achievement has been disappointing despite the various policies, efforts and priorities in their favour the past 30 years are set to benefit from new Government programmes.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir today outlined seven steps the Government would be taking to improve the lot of Sabah Bumiputera with the hope that the trade and industry community in the State would significantly grow and a Bumiputera entrepreneur middle class group would emerge in the state.

This will be consistent with the Government's objective of ensuring an economic balance between the Bumiputera and non-Bumiputera, he added.

Among the steps to be taken are for institutions of higher learning in Sabah such as Universiti Malaysia Sabah and UiTM to hold short-term and long-term entrepreneurial training programmes for retiring government and private sector officers. The Education Ministry will also work closely with the Entrepreneur Development Ministry to increase the number of entrepreneur training institutions in the state.

Dr Mahathir, opening the 2001 Sabah Bumiputera Economic Congress at the Magellan Sutera, said priority would continue to be given to Sabah Bumiputera entrepreneurs in terms of government contracts on condition that these were not turned into 'Ali Baba' entities.

He also said the government would help develop and upgrade programmes in Sabah including those specifically for women.

The Entrepreneur Development Ministry would carry out a feasibility study in Sabah to ensure the success of the 'Prosper' project aimed at increasing the number of Bumiputera in the retail business.

Besides this, the Foreign and International Trade and Industry ministries as well as the Sabah Industrial Development Ministry will play an aggressive role to hasten the development of the East Asian Growth Area to open new markets for local Bumiputera entrepreneurs.

The Government, Dr Mahathir said would broaden the concept of mentoring, vendoring and franchising in Sabah to further expand Bumiputera business involvement in manufacturing and the production of electrical and electronic equipment, plastic, furniture, petroleum, energy and telecommunications.

Nevertheless, the Prime Minister reminded Bumiputera entrepreneurs that the government's efforts alone were not enough and that they must change their attitude and work harder and with more perseverance.

"There will be no increase in the Bumiputera equity each time a Bumiputera share allocation is given, if it is sold to a non-Bumiputera for quick gains.

"The money they get is spent and they wait for other share allocations," he said, adding that the habit of selling licences and other allocations for Bumiputera would not help to increase the Bumiputera share in business.

He said selling (Bumiputera) names to non-Bumiputera was another way to make a failure of policies to help increase Bumiputera participation in business.

He gave some tips to help Bumiputera businessmen succeed including improving their management skills, building their capital base by practising thrift and patience and making sacrifices.

Dr Mahathir reminded participants there was wisdom in the old Malay saying "biar lambat, asal selamat" in building one's business into a success.

Earlier, Sabah Chief Minister Datuk Osu Sukam said one of the biggest impediments to the growth of Bumiputera businessmen in Sabah is the negative traditional thinking of the Bumiputera communities. He noted that a large number of Bumiputera in Sabah were fishermen, farmers and craftsmen with a handful who run the restaurant business.

Osu called on the Bumiputera businessmen to change their mindset and remove any negative traditional thinking to take on the 21st century in face of the challenges of globalisation.

Committee chairman of the congress, Datuk Pengiran Mohd Hussein Mohd Tahir Nasruddin said some 850 people were taking part in the two-day congress, themed Bumiputera Economy After 2001 - Challenges and Directions.