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Mahathir-Race

NO RACE IS MARGINALISED IN MALAYSIA, SAYS MAHATHIR

KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 28 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the government adopts an open attitude when dealing with issues affecting all races and does not marginalise any one race in the country.

The prime minister said the interests of all races were considered in the formulation of national policies and strategies like the Third Outline Perspective Plan (OPP3) for the 2001-2010 period.

"In drawing up the OPP3, the government set up the National Economic Consultative Council II (NECC II) which comprised 154 members representing various community groups, including Indians.

"The government had given careful consideration to all recommendations submitted by NECC II. Where suitable, the recommendations were accepted and made part of the OPP3 policy and strategy," he said at the golden jubilee dinner of the Malaysian Associated Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (MAICCI) in Seri Kembangan here tonight.

Dr Mahathir said under the OPP3, the government was committed to improving the economic status of Indians, including working to boost their corporate equity ownership from 1.5 per cent in 1999 to three per cent by 2010.

A study would also be conducted to assess the level of Indian participation in the economy to draw up suitable strategies and programmes, he said.

He said the Indian community had also contributed to the country and its economic development although they were a minority group, and their contributions were equally big when compared to those of other races.

Dr Mahathir asked the Indian community to pay attention to national integration because only with this could all the races in the country realise their aspiration of continuing to enjoy peace, harmony and progress.

"Efforts to promote national integration should be made at all times and at all levels -- in schools, at the workplace, in housing estates and in the sports arena.

"We should always be wary of elements out to undermine the peaceful and harmonious living in this country. We cannot compromise on this matter," he said.

Dr Mahathir also said all races should prepare themselves to contribute to the country's development or risk being left behind.

"We must realise that we have to face various challenges in whatever field we venture into. Only those with confidence can face the stiff competition to achieve success," he said.

Urging the MAICCI to gauge its achievements, he said it should plan its development in line with the national development objectives and by taking into account the rapid changes at the national and international levels.

He said Indian businessmen were currently concentrating on certain activities like retail, distribution, food catering and construction to meet the needs of the Indian community.

"Members of the chambers should involve themselves actively and more widely in the manufacturing and services sectors and industries with potential for growth which are being created, like biotechnology, equipment and machinery, packaging and multimedia development," he said.

He advised Indian businessmen to take advantage of market expansion programmes like the Industry Networking and Global Suppliers programmes.

Under the Industry Networking programme, local companies in the small- and medium-scale industries (SMIs) are linked up with big companies and multinationals (MNCs) as suppliers of component parts or certain services.

Under the Global Supplier programme, the capability of SMIs is enhanced to enable them to supply world-class goods and services to big companies, not only for their operations in Malaysia but also throughout the world.

Dr Mahathir also asked Indian entrepreneurs to respond to the challenge of restructuring their organisations and business practices to be in tune with developments in ICT, the Internet and e-commerce.

Indian chambers of commerce should show the way by implementing projects to make the Indian community stronger and more resilient in the long term, like setting up major consortiums so that the businesses of members could benefit from expanding operations locally and abroad, he said.

The prime minister also stressed that businesses in the country need not be separated according to race because meaningful participation in a business owned by various races would not sideline the interests of any race.

"What is important is that all races in Malaysia get a share of our country's economy," he said.

-- BERNAMA  
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