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Plan heeds rights of all Malaysians

Dr Jacob George

THE three main thrusts of the Eighth Malaysia Plan are to shift the growth strategy "from input-driven to knowledge-driven", to transform the Malaysian agricultural, manufacturing and services sectors and, quite rightly, to create an environment where the wealth of the nation would be shared more fairly, to strengthen and result in social stability.

A clear example is the plan to double to three per cent the corporate stake held by Malaysian Indians by the year 2010, while maintaining the Government's commitment to others.

Once again, it is an effort consistent with the last 43 years of the Barisan Nasional Government which takes cognizance of the rights and interests of all Malaysians.

However, there is a need to consistently monitor that the stakes made available for the Malaysian Indians will not be hijacked by powerful and well-connected Malaysian Indians at the expense of those whom the Government has actually targeted.

There are enough examples from the past where Government efforts for the community did not reach the intended target population.

It must be noted that development spending in the Eighth Malaysia Plan is 6.2 per cent higher than in the last five years.

It is quite obvious that economic sectors have once again received the lion's share of RM50.5 billion.

Kudos to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad for cutting defence spending by nearly 16 per cent and diverting the said allocation to the social sector, confirming and entrenching the Government's social commitment.

It is also clear that over RM22 billion will be used to improve transport and communications, which include plans for a monorail for the administrative capital of Putrajaya and Cyberjaya.

Those who have been unjustifiably harping at international conferences that Malaysia has abandoned her agriculture sector for heavy industry have now been proven wrong with the allocation of RM7.9 billion for agriculture, to raise production and to cut soaring import bills.

One distinctive feature of the Plan is the Government's decision to seek feedback on privatisation, to ensure only commercially viable projects will continue.

No one will dispute the allocation of RM22.7 billion for education and training, which will result in 20,000 new classrooms, four universities and 15 training institutes, with 8,000 schools equipped with computers. A further RM5.5 billion has been allocated to build 31 hospitals and 172 clinics, strengthening the Government health initiatives, and RM4.2 billion for low and medium cost housing, once again taking cognizance of the basic needs of grassroot Malaysians.

The Eighth Malaysia Plan should convince all Malaysians that the Barisan Nasional Government is committed to improving living standards for all Malaysians in a peaceful, stable political and economic environment.

It is now our duty to support this initiative of the Government and see that a minority with their own agenda and brand of democracy will not destroy all that we have achieved.