

15 JAN 2001

Mahathir-Businessmen

PM WANTS MALAY BUSINESSMEN TO FIND AND CORRECT OWN FLAWS

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 15 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said small- and medium-scale Bumiputera businessmen have to examine themselves first and correct own weaknesses in order to graduate to other fields successfully.

He said most Bumiputera businessmen and entrepreneurs tend to blame others, including the government, for failed ventures or inability to compete with the other communities.

Despite the provision of various incentives, funds and the formation of several agencies to help them, the level of their accomplishment was still dissatisfactory, he said.

"Is it that there is no mistake at all on our part that contributes to our failure? It is better that we ask ourselves this, because if we don't, we will not know," he said when addressing Bumiputera small businessmen at a meeting organised by the Entrepreneur Development Ministry at the Putra World Trade Centre here today.

Dr Mahathir said the Malays could only overcome their failure in commerce and low achievement in education when they bother to self-examine themselves.

Reflecting on his days as a petty trader in Alor Setar's famous Malay bazaar, Pekan Rabu, Dr Mahathir said he observed then that most Malay traders did not regard trading as a life-time vocation but only as a temporary one pending securing other jobs.

Even as road-side stand-hawkers, Malays failed to do business efficiently by not displaying merchandise and decorating the stalls to attract customers, unlike stall-operators from the other communities.

Dr Mahathir said some may regard these cosmetic embellishments as petty but they are vital business factors.

He also drew the meeting's attention to the constant need for efficient business management, especially that for financial matters.

Dr Mahathir said: "There must be this habit of making ledger entries to keep track of money coming in and going out. Each time money is received must be recorded, likewise each payment made out must also be recorded down. Only then we'll have financial records."

"Actually, it is not difficult to do business. The difficult part is to keep it straight," he said.

The government found that Malay traders were not interested in retail business although such venture could expand into big enterprises as evident by the existence of the Carrefour, Makro and Giant hypermarkets, among others, he said.

Most Malays involved in business were only interested in securing projects through issuance of contract tenders, he said.

The government, through the Entrepreneur Development Ministry, was striving to enlarge the pool of Malay retail businessmen and those handling franchised laundry and restaurant chains, he said.

Dr Mahathir said more business opportunities in the manufacturing sector were also being identified for Malays to be wholesalers of electrical products and suppliers of components to manufacturers.

"The government has identified 150 businesses and hopes that, of the number, small businessmen can deal in 36 types of manufactured products," he said.

The prime minister also spoke about poor achievement by Malay students

in tertiary institutions saying that despite fixing a 60 per cent Malay enrolment quota, qualification-wise only 20 per cent of them are eligible to enter university.

While some quarters called for adjustment to the education system, the question here was why Chinese and Indian students using the same system could score excellent results, he said.

"The truth is Malay students choose not to study hard but to have fun instead.

"Today... we have 60 per cent Malay students entering universities but only 40 per cent passed and none obtained first class honours or second upper at that. Is it the fault of others ?" Dr Mahathir asked.

Dr Mahathir later devoted almost an hour for a dialogue with about 1,000 people attending the meeting.

-- BERNAMA

HS RIZ AZZ RYN