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Seeking racial balance (HL)

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JOHOR BARU, Sat. - The Government wants an increase in non-Bumiputera representation in the civil service to promote national unity.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today there was a need to ensure all races were sufficiently represented at all levels in the service.

"We are a little bit worried that there are not that many non-Malays - that is Chinese and Indians - in the government service.

"We used to have Indians as secretaries-general in the ministries. But it is difficult to get even one such person now," he said after opening the 55th MIC annual general assembly (See P4-5).

He said this when asked about efforts, besides those contained in the Outline Perspective Plan and Eighth Malaysia Plan, to promote national unity.

Dr Mahathir said non-Malays were fairly represented only in the diplomatic service, but not in the armed forces or the police.

"Fair representation of the races should not only be restricted to government service. It should be reflected in the private sector as well.

"This should be seen in all companies and corporations. There should be full representation of all races. Traditionally, the Malays have joined government service and non-Malays the private sector."

To a question whether low wages and poor perks were keeping the Chinese and Indians from joining the civil service, he said this could be so, but felt that the Chinese saw business as a more lucrative alternative.

"Increasing civil service wages is not the solution. If the Government increases its wages, the wages in private sector will also increase. We cannot match them."

He said the racial representation in universities was also worrisome, as the Malays depended too much on the quota allocated to them.

He said Malay students were forced to enter universities as many were not sufficiently qualified to enrol in private institutions of higher learning.

This was also because the fees were substantially higher, a fact that the Government was willing to tackle by offering financial help, where possible."

On a suggestion by MIC president Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu that the university intake system be reviewed to ensure deserving students obtained seats, he said this implied the need for a quota for Indians, and he understood the sentiment.

To a suggestion by Gerakan that the Government study racial representation in both the public and private sectors, he said this could be done but it remained to be seen if it was a practical move.