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Mahathir-Affirmative

MALAYS FAILED TO ACHIEVE TARGET BECAUSE OF COMPLACENCY, SAYS PM

KUALA LUMPUR, June 20 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad says it is complacency and the feeling of the continued existence of a safety net for Bumiputeras, and not the policy itself, that has led to Malaysia's affirmative action not producing its desired results.

"Our view is that the policy is right but after sometime the response has not been as positive as it should be," the Prime Minister said when asked to comment on whether the policy was at fault for the Malays' failure to achieve the target set in the affirmative action.

Affirmative action was introduced in Malaysia 32 years ago through the New Economic Policy (NEP) and later the New Development Policy.

Its aim was to ensure that Malays and other Bumiputeras controlled at least 30 percent of the country's wealth but to date the Malays' share is only 19 percent.

Speaking at press conference at the end of the first day of the three-day Umno General Assembly here, Dr Mahathir noted that the affirmative action policy had at its initial stage yielded good result.

"But later on there were some detractors due to the feeling of complacency and the feeling there will be safety net (for the Malays) all the time," said the Prime Minister, who is Umno president.

As such, the results of the NEP were not as successful as what the government had wanted to see, he said.

Asked by a foreign reporter if the government had entrusted business magnate Syed Mokhtar Al-Bukhary with too many projects, Dr Mahathir said:

"He is not given a lot of projects. He is starting his own projects. If there are good, the government will have no objection to that. It is his money."

Syed Mokhtar is better-known for his infrastructure projects in Johor, where he control the ports of Tanjung Pelepas and Pasir Gudang and is in the midst of turning Johor's Senai Airport into a airfreight hub.

The tycoon is believed to be controlling MMC Corporation, which owns MMC Engineering that has signed an MOU with Siemens of Germany to jointly bid for the design and construction of the mechanical works of the Bakun Hydroelectric Dam project.

Dr Mahathir, who is also the Finance Minister, said that in awarding contracts, the government would go for those with capabilities.

"You don't expect me to give projects to failures," he said.

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