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Mahathir-Computer

DR MAHATHIR DISAPPOINTED OVER SCHOOL COMPUTER LAB PROBLEM

PUTRAJAYA, July 23 (Bernama) -- The Prime Minister, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, said today he is most disappointed and saddened over the problem that has risen in the construction of computer laboratories for schools assigned to Bumiputera contractors.

The Prime Minister said the government's aim in apportioning contracts to Bumiputeras was to help as many big and small Malay contractors as possible.

Unfortunately some of the contracts changed hands several times and in the process causing their value to go down and forcing the last person to receive the contract to use all kinds of methods to save costs resulting in low quality building materials being used.

"I am sorry if we can no longer give contracts to people who cannot do the job. We have a responsibility over government funds and wish to help Bumiputeras.

"But if Bumiputeras do this, it will be difficult for us to help," he said when opening the 24th annual general meeting of the Malaysia Contractors Association of Malaysia here.

Dr Mahathir said the problem would not have occurred if Malay contractors carried out their work diligently and with responsibility and thus earning public confidence in their companies.

"But we want to look for as much profit as possible to the extent of using planks with holes and not even mixing the cement correctly," Dr Mahathir said.

Dr Mahathir said he did not want to blame anyone as all parties were responsible and these included the government and he himself for trying to meet the requests of Malay contractors.

The issue came to light when Works Minister Datuk Seri S.Samy Vellu disclosed that Public Works Department (JKR) engineers had found that 574 of the 600 computer laboratories built in the East Zone under the school computerisation programme were not safe and in danger of collapse.

News reports said some of them had cracked ceilings and damaged roofing.

The Prime Minister said if a person sought profits in an untrustworthy way surely others would not trust that person.

"If we do the job correctly, we may lose financially but we will win the people's trust and this will make it easy for Malay contractors to get projects," he said.

There would be no need for monitoring by the JKR or project management consultants if contractors did their work correctly, meeting the stipulated standards.

Dr Mahathir said there were indeed successful Malay contractors of integrity who were able to compete for projects overseas but their number was rather small.

In this respect, Dr Mahathir said the actual measure of a successful Bumiputera contractor would be the extent to which he was able to win contracts from the private sector.

The Prime Minister said based on his studies, many of the Bumiputera contractors obtained their contracts from the government.

"I want to see members of this association bid for tenders for non-government owned projects. We must establish credibility with non-government bodies," he said.

Dr Mahathir said that was why the government supported contractors who succeeded in getting projects overseas for this meant they were able to stand on their own without expectation of government help.

The Prime Minister also spoke at length about a book which he had read on the success of a minority group in many countries throughout the world, where it had been able to dominate the economy and wealth compared to the majority race in those countries.

In this context, the Malays should ask themselves why they were unable to be successful like other races such as the Chinese in this country.

He said Malays should emulate the patient attitude of the Chinese and also their willingness to start at the bottom and then going up in search of wealth.

"I do not agree that youths coming out of universities should straight away become industrialists. How can this be? Work first and gain experience," the Prime Minister said.

During the dialogue that followed, Dr Mahathir said the government acknowledged that it was incapable of monitoring all the projects that were being implemented.

The Prime Minister said it was for the ministries themselves to monitor their respective projects.

When speaking to reporters, Dr Mahathir said the Cabinet today discussed the issue of school laboratories and efforts were being made to overcome the problem.

Dr Mahathir said appropriate action would be taken against those who had been negligent when carrying out their work.

All aspects of the issue would be considered so that blame was not laid on the innocent, he added.

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