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Parliament-Mahathir (Bumiputera)

IMPROVE SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE, BUMIS TOLD

KUALA LUMPUR, June 24 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today urged the bumiputeras to improve their skills and knowledge apart from changing their mindset to deal with the challenges brought by the nation's rapid globalisation, modernisation and economic growth.

The prime minister said: "We are confident that if the bumiputeras can slightly change their culture, they can adapt (themselves) to the world's very rapid pace."

He said the bumiputeras, if given certain training and opportunities, would be able to deal with the rapid flow of economic development.

Dr Mahathir said this when replying to Datuk Ahmad Husni Mohamed Hanadzlah (BN-Tambun) in the Dewan Rakyat here.

Ahmad Husni had asked whether Dr Mahathir was concerned with the minimum achievement of the bumiputeras in the economy, science and technology in facing future globalisation challenges.

Dr Mahathir said: "The government is aware that the bumiputera achievement generally is still low in certain fields and has been hit by the economic slowdown.

"This is really a cause for concern.

"But for certain, we must realise that (bumiputera) success is not dependent on the government's efforts alone," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the bumiputeras themselves should be willing to take up the challenge and work hard to reinforce their existing foundation and improve their competitiveness, especially in dealing with the future and a globalised era.

He said that although the bumiputeras' success in certain sectors was still low, their percentage in economic improvement was more than that for the non-bumiputeras and foreigners.

To a question from Datuk Mustafa Ali (PAS-Dungun), Dr Mahathir said that many bumiputeras had been successful in owning shares but individually, the number was still low.

"The reason that is many of the shares are being held by bumiputera agencies," he said.

Mustafa had asked when bumiputera individual ownership of shares could be increased as most of their share ownership was through agencies.

Dr Mahathir said that among the reasons bumiputeras lacked success in equity ownership was their attitude of letting opportunities slip away.

"When they are given opportunities they sell off the opportunities, when they are given contracts they do away with the contracts, when they are given bumiputera-allotted shares in firms they dispose of the shares," he said.

The prime minister said the government had set up unit trust agencies to acquire bumiputera-allotted shares before allowing individual bumiputeras to invest in these agencies.

"Indirectly, the share ownership is not by these agencies but by those who bought the shares (in the agencies)," said Dr Mahathir.

He said promotions to sell the shares had been frequently held, including in Kota Baharu, and many had shown interest to buy it.

Among the successful bumiputeras were MPs from PAS, he said.

"This shows that we do not practise double standards. We give opportunities but at times when we give them opportunities, they bite our fingers, hence it is difficult for us to offer (chances), for the second

time," he said.
-- BERNAMA
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