

03/11/2003

MCA Youth calls for level playing field in awarding of contracts

KUALA LUMPUR, Sun. - MCA Youth wants the Government to abolish the quota system in the awarding of government contracts - a call made barely three days after an announcement that Bumiputera companies will now get at least double of such offers compared to previously.

The movement's economics bureau chairman, Loh Chew June, said many Bumiputera firms were already performing very well and it was high time the Government gave others a chance to compete.

"It is time the Government opened up. Perhaps it will take time but there should be a level playing field. With the advent of globalisation, we must all be prepared to compete," said Loh.

Last week, when tabling the Eighth Malaysia Plan Mid-Term Review in the Dewan Rakyat, former Prime Minister and Finance Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad had said the Government would be awarding at least 60 per cent of its procurements and contracts to Bumiputera companies.

Previously, Bumiputera firms were awarded only 30 per cent of government contracts.

Dr Mahathir said the move was necessary to ensure that Bumiputeras remained employed.

He dismissed suggestions that it was a step backward in making the community more competitive.

He added that such contracts would only be given to responsible and competent Bumiputeras.

Loh, who is a councillor with Kajang Municipal Council, said over the years, the New Economic Policy and the National Development Policy had allowed many Bumiputera companies to become as competitive as their non-Bumiputera counterparts.

Asked if he was disappointed with the new policy which gave Bumiputera firms more opportunities, Loh said he was not but added that the Government should also ensure that local companies remained competitive.

Meanwhile, MCA vice-president Datuk Dr Fong Chan Onn said he hoped that the Government would award 20 to 30 per cent of the smaller government contracts to non-Bumiputera companies in the long run, as these firms got practically nothing now.

"In the long run, we must face up to competition. I hope there will be an opening up of government contracts in future, instead of limiting them to a number of companies now," said the Human Resources Minister.

Fong added that while it was necessary to give non-Bumiputera companies more opportunities, it should be done gradually.