Many factors taking into account in poverty eradication programme – PM

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The poverty eradication programme in the country had been implemented not only by taking into consideration the racial and ethnic composition, but also various other factors in the efforts to create fair and equal opportunities for all.

Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin said it was also to ensure that the country's wealth could be distributed and enjoyed equally by the people.

"The Perikatan Nasional government's policy is to implement a comprehensive poverty eradication programme, and this takes into account the disparities between bumiputra and non-bumiputera, regional and non-regional areas including in Sabah and Sarawak after various initiatives done previously."

He said this in reply to senator Razali Idris who wanted to know about the initiatives taken by the government to tackle poverty issues in Kelantan, Terengganu, Sabah and Sarawak.

The prime minister said the emphasis given by the government on the efforts to improve the socio-economic status of bumiputeras did not mean that the government was sidelining the non-bumiputeras, hence the creation of the Shared Prosperity Vision policy which took into consideration the interests of all races.

"Nevertheless, bumiputeras make up the majority with almost 70 percent of the country's total population, and that is why the government focuses on them to develop the economy as a whole," he said.

Muhyiddin, however, said that the government was always concerned with the problems faced by the non-bumiputeras and would not neglect them, especially in terms of poverty.

"We cannot neglect them or let them live in poverty because they are non-bumiputeras; we cannot just help the Malays to be richer. No, we cannot. We must have a fair policy for all races in the country," he said.

Muhyiddin said that one of the problems faced by the government in the efforts to eradicate poverty was the lack of a database which has complete information on the current achievements of bumiputeras in various economic sectors.

For that, he said the government had established the Bumiputera Agenda Steering Unit (Teraju) under the Prime Minister's Department, as the secretariat to coordinate and steer the bumiputera agenda in a bid to increase the bumiputera's share of the economy.

Besides, in order to empower the bumiputera economy, Muhyiddin said the focus would also be given to their participation in certain sectors, such as industrial, banking, manufacturing and electronic, where the government could identify their weaknesses and introduce certain initiatives to ensure that they will not lag behind compared to other races.

In reply to Razali's question on the effectiveness of the Bumiputera Prosperity Council (MKB), the prime minister said the bumiputera poverty rate stood at 7.2 percent in 2019, while the unemployment rate for the second quarter of this year was 5.2 percent compared to the national average of 5.1 percent.

He said bumiputera equity ownership in the corporate sector was only 16.2 percent in 2015 compared to non-bumiputera at 30.7 percent and foreign ownership at 45.3 percent.

As such, he said the MKB is the highest platform to renew and strengthen all the bumiputera socio-economic development plans.

"The setting up of the council was part of the strategic intervention framework to steer and accelerate the empowerment of bumiputera economy through capacity and capability building efforts across various programmes.

"To ensure that the council will achieve its objectives, it will be supported by two committees, namely the steering committee to be chaired by the minister in the Prime Minister's Department (Special Functions) and the working committee to be chaired by Teraju chief executive officer.

"Both committees will meet periodically and involve all the relevant implementing agencies. For the senate's information, the council has convened its first meeting on Aug 11, 2020," he said.

According to Muhyiddin, the achievements of the ministry, as well as the relevant agencies and non-governmental organisations in mobilising the Bumiputera empowerment agenda, would be monitored and evaluated through a key performance indicator (KPI) framework which will involve all the heads of the relevant agencies.

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