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Aid for Indian businesses

'CHILDREN OF THIS SOIL': Govt has two-pronged approach to assist community, says PM

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THE government continues to invest in the Indian community by addressing the needs of Indian businesses.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak said strategic units were set up under his office to strengthen Indian businesses in the country.

The Secretariat for Empowerment of Indian Entrepreneurs (Seed), Special Implementation Taskforce on Indian Community, Tamil School Action Council and Special Unit for Socio-Economic Development of the Indian Community were established to aid the Indian community.

"Not only that, the government has developed a two-pronged approach to address the needs of Malaysian Indian businesses.

"We have put in place measures to assist micro-enterprises and to bring them into the economic mainstream and contribute to growth," Najib said at the Malaysian Associated Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (MAICCI) 65th anniversary celebration here yesterday.

He said the second approach was to help innovative and high-growth companies harness their potential and integrate into the global market, thus boosting their competitiveness.

Najib said Seed had facilitated over RM711 million in loans through schemes, such as Tekun and



MALAYSIAN ASSOCIATED INDIAN CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (MAICCI) PRESIDENT TAN SRI K. KENNETH ESWARAN PLACING A GARLAND ON DATUK SERI NAJIB RAZAK AS THE PRIME MINISTER ARRIVES AT THE PUTRA WORLD TRADE CENTRE TO ATTEND MAICCI'S 65TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION YESTERDAY. PIC BY KHAIRULLI AZRY BIDIN

Amanah Ikhtiar, aside from financing small and medium enterprises (SMEs) via government agencies, such as SME Bank and Malaysian Industrial Development Finance Bhd, which benefited more than 24,000 Indian entrepreneurs.

The government established programmes to address the needs of the Indian community, ranging from Tamil school development to skills training opportunities for under-achieving Indian youths, he said.

Najib said 167,500 members of the poor Indian community received entrepreneurship and skills training under the 10th Malaysia Plan, adding that efforts had been carried out to resolve citizenship and documentation issues. He said there were also efforts to provide funding to non-governmental organisations

that had direct involvement with the Indian community.

Najib, who launched MAICCI's Young Entrepreneurs programme yesterday, said the government was formulating a development roadmap for the Indian community under the 10th Malaysia Plan.

"This will boost the standards of living and, at the same time, I urge MAICCI to participate in the Indian Community Blueprint Secretariat programme being run by my office, which will be delivered by the end of this year."

Najib said in the long run, the country needed mechanisms that would work for all races and policies that could identify everyone as a Malaysian society.

"The government has always made it clear how much we value the

contributions of Malaysian Indians, the sons and daughters of this soil."

MAICCI's request for land to build a secretariat office would be given full consideration, Najib said.

He said the government would continue to engage with MAICCI as it had done an incredible job in bringing together various Indian trade associations and state chambers over the last 65 years.

MAICCI president Tan Sri K. Kenneth Eswaran said the chamber strived to remain relevant while adapting itself to the changing entrepreneurial landscape.

He said he hoped the prime minister would look into addressing issues, such as removing red tape in various applications, as it would give an equal playing field to businesses.