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Dr M: Not time yet to abolish 30pc Bumi equity

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KUALA LUMPUR: Former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad has disagreed with the MCA's proposal for the condition of 30 per cent Bumiputera equity ownership in public-listed companies to be abolished.

He said this was not the right time to do so, while the target for Bumiputera equity participation had not been achieved.

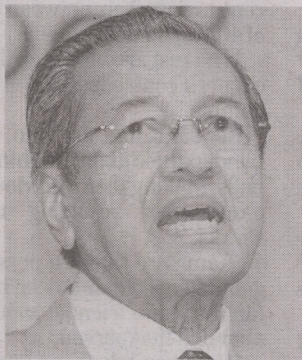
"If we have achieved the 30 per cent target for Bumiputeras, 40 per cent for non-Bumiputeras and 30 for foreigners, then we can do away with the condition. We have not reached that yet...there's still a lot to be done.

"If we reduce it to 20 per cent today and it does not expand while the economy does, the Bumiputera equity participation will get smaller. We have to take all this into consideration."

He was speaking at an Aidilfitri function of the Malaysia Muslim Welfare Organisation (Perkim) here yesterday.

Dr Mahathir, who is Perkim president, said although the equity ownership could be changed, the target for Bumiputeras needed to be protected.

"I think this is not a suitable time to make any adjustment as the world is in turmoil. It does not mean that if we abolish the equity quota, it will



Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad says issue should have been brought to BN's attention

make the companies stronger and more competitive.

"If we reduce the Bumiputera equity participation to 20 per cent, then the others must also reduce theirs."

Dr Mahathir said such a matter should have been brought to the Barisan Nasional's attention as it was raised by a BN component party.

On Monday, MCA vice-president Datuk Liow Tiong Lai said the condition for Bumiputera equity in public-listed firms should be abolished for them to remain competitive.

Liow was also quoted as saying that the 30 per cent target set was a hindrance to the creation of true partnership between Malay, Chinese and Indian businessmen

in the country.

On the proposal for debates to be held among Umno candidates vying for the top party posts, he said Malaysians had not reached the level of the Americans yet to have such debates.

"Our people don't care about what we debate. The Umno people will support Umno, Pas supporters will support Pas, and MCA supporters will support MCA or other Chinese-based parties. What we debate on will have no bearing on them. It (debate) is only good for showing off how articulate we are."

On Gua Musang member of parliament Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah who has offered to contest the party presidency but has yet to receive even one nomination, he said it would be tough for Tengku Razaleigh to contest in the party polls.

"Since we have agreed to still have the quota system, then we have to follow. But if you can't even get one nomination, then you won't be able to contest."

On the view that the keen contest for the Umno Youth chief's post involving his son Datuk Mukhriz and the movement's deputy chief, Khairy Jamaluddin, could cause a split among members, Dr Mahathir said it could still happen even if there was no contest for the post. — Bernama