

PM wants living cost here lowered

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KOTA KINABALU, Tues. — Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today said the higher cost of living in Sabah compared to Peninsular Malaysia should not have been so.

"We must seek ways to reduce the cost of living, otherwise the higher incomes resulting from rapid development could not be enjoyed by everyone in the actual sense," he said.

He conceded that it was difficult to reduce the prices of goods but said manpower and service costs, which contribute to price fluctuations, could be checked if all parties were determined to cap the spiralling cost of living.

Mahathir, who is on a three-day official visit to Sabah, also said everyone should strive to check price increases of goods in Sabah so that the people, especially the lower-income group, could truly taste progress.

He said this when he launched the Kota Kinabalu Industrial Park (KKIP) in Talipok, about 25 kilometres from here.

The 3,600-hectare KKIP comprises a 785-hectare industrial estate, free trade zone (196ha), commercial park (59ha), housing estate (967ha), golf course (124ha), resort centre (783ha), and nature park (453ha).

Touching further on the high cost of living in the State, he said higher income does not necessarily lead to the ability to acquire goods and services if there is a corresponding increase in their costs.

"What is important is the purchasing power ... the amount of money we have is not important," he said.

The Government had done its part by introducing price control of essential items, he said.

He urged the business sector to be satisfied with small profits and go for volumes of sales through lower prices as such would enable the people to have greater purchasing power.

"We must discipline ourselves so that the cost of things

is within control," he said.

He said another approach would be to control costs and reduce spending.

Mahathir also said Sabah should focus on local resource-based industries to ensure more sustainable economic growth to bring its industrial progress on par with that of its counterparts in Peninsular Malaysia.

He said the State could save on foreign exchange by emphasising industries using local raw materials and manpower, and this would contribute towards a more vibrant economy in the long run.

"If we import raw materials and export only value-added goods, as is being done by some industries in Peninsular Malaysia, the returns are low and this will be a loss," he said.

He said the industries to be ventured into should preferably be non-labour intensive or at least had the potential to be developed using automation.

At the ceremony, Mahathir witnessed the signing of Memorandums of Intent between the Sabah Economic Development Corporation (Sedco) and several groups (PLEASE SEE PAGE THREE).

Sedco, a state statutory body, owns KKIP Sdn Bhd, the manager of KKIP.

Chief Minister Datuk Salleh Said Keruak said the State government, with the help of the Federal government, was confident of attracting more investments by improving infrastructural facilities which were inferior to those available in other states, he said.

Mahathir later attended a state development briefing at the multi-vision room of the Sabah Foundation Building here.

Also present at the briefing which lasted more than an hour were Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, Salleh, and Federal and State ministers.

The Federal ministers are here to attend tomorrow's weekly Cabinet meeting, the first to be held in Sabah.

Produce quality graduates — PM to universities

KOTA KINABALU, Tues. — Malaysia is rapidly developing a high level of education but such is not as fast as the economic progress and this has made the role of universities more important and challenging in producing educated and trained manpower.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said this when officiating at the ground-breaking ceremony of University Malaysia Sabah (UMS), the country's ninth university, at Teluk Likas.

"We are not only talking about producing graduates who are educated but also those who are brave and capable of taking on the challenges in the world of reality," he said.

He said education is a big investment which is important to the country.

"We can see that developed and rich countries put in a lot of investments into human resource development," he said.

He said if Malaysia wants to progress further ahead, it must double efforts to compete with developed countries and its workforce must consist of trained, skilful and educated people.

Mahathir said in order to produce educated and quality graduates, universities must be prepared to make changes not only to its structure as a high learning institution but also in terms of its curriculum and teachings relevant to the challenges of the 21st century.

"Universities in Malaysia must be brave to pursue new fields by taking into account the needs of the country such as management, industrialisation and technology," he said.

He added that science-based and technology-based courses such as automobile engineering, aerospace engineering and ship-building engineering which could enhance the ability to compete with developed countries must be considered by universities.

Mahathir also said university leaders whether in the field of academic or management must be brave to address changes "and such changes include attitude and strategy to source for finance to undertake programmes or projects that would bring good returns for them and the country.

"It is time for universities to enhance their cooperation with the corporate sector to find means to carry out their research work," he said.

The Prime Minister said one of the reasons for the corporatisation of universities is to pave the way for universities to overcome their financial problems in studies and research work.

He urged universities to re-assess the methods and ways of teachings, for instance the problems faced by Bumiputera students in science and mathematics.

"Such problems must be addressed because if the Bumiputera students are left behind, it would be difficult for them to compete with others who have made much progress," he said.

He said Vision 2020 would not be meaningful if the achievements of the Bumiputeras such as in engineering, medicine, accountancy, management and communications, are not on par with other communities.

"The ways to disseminate teachings to the Bumiputeras must be according to their characteristics and needs ... orthodox methods may not be suitable," he said.

Mahathir said as for the Bumiputeras in Sabah, the UMS would serve as the symbol of aspiration for the people.

"Maybe the UMS can do a research on the process of integration between the Bumiputera and non-Bumiputera communities," he said, adding that the process of integration among the ethnic groups in Sabah is unique and a study on it would help the Government build a Malaysian society that would share the same experience and values, among others.

He said a university such as the UMS is not only a place to acquire academic knowledge on "hard sciences" but it must also contribute towards national development and expansion of cultural values.

"A university must produce graduates who are disciplined, trustworthy and patriotic apart from being educated, skilled and efficient graduates," he added.

Mahathir also said Malaysia, a multi-racial nation, had achieved success and progress and they are a result of hard work, courage and endurance in facing challenges and changes that had brought about progress.

Meanwhile Education Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak who was also present today said UMS is a promise made by the Prime Minister for the people of Sabah and it had now been fulfilled.

"I dare to say that the UMS campus here will be the most beautiful in the country and possibly among the world best," he said.

Najib said the proposed curriculum for UMS is one that is progressive and in accordance with the needs of the country.

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LAUNCHED — Mahathir endorsing on the plaque during the launching of Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) at Teluk Likas yesterday. On his right is UMS Vice Chancellor Prof Datuk Abu Hassan Othman.



This is how the proposed Kota Kinabalu Industrial Park looks like.



Mahathir and his deputy Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim before the State development briefing yesterday. At right is Datuk Salleh. Also present were members of the Federal and State