

Lack of able managers among Malays

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KUALA LUMPUR, Sat.— Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said tonight the Government has been hindered by the lack of able managers, especially among the bumiputras, in its efforts to implement the New Economic Policy and to restructure society.

The availability of opportunities, licences and

capital will come to nothing if there is no management skill among the bumiputras," he said at the inaugural meeting of the Harvard Business School Alumni Club of Malaysia.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said country's administrators were previously regarded as a "breed of mandarins" separated not only from the people but also from the staff working under them.

"Their duty was to

give orders and to mete out punishment for those who fail," he said.

They were also segregated from their counterparts in the private sector — the managers, he said.

But times have changed and administration now meant the management of governments. And as administrators became managers their duties and problems could no longer be distinguished from those of the managers in the private sector, he said.

Efficiency

Government administrators and managers in the private sector must manage with efficiency and for profit, said Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir.

"There may be those who laugh at the idea of the Government managing for profit.

"But this approach is true not only with Government-owned corporations but also in departments where the main task is to expend money," he said.

The Public Works Department (JKR), for example, he said, spends vast sums of money and were not asked to make profits.

But any failure to meet project schedules and the frequency of cost over-runs must reflect management failure at least to a certain extent.

"In other words, a loss, whatever the form it takes, must be equated to project failure, failure to make a profit in the business world," he said.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said it was a fact that the financial situation of the Malaysian Government since inde-

pendence had always been good and Malaysian credit worthiness had never been questioned overseas.

"That this is so signifies good management ability in the Government.

"A spendthrift Malaysian Government could easily bankrupt the nation no matter what the resources are.

"In the past, managers just happened. A person became a manager almost by accident. Painful experience was the teacher."

But modern society could not leave things to accidents, he said, and hence the development of the science and art of management.

"Today, managers are trained and produced. The self-made manager may be a little cynical about the manner we produce managers now but our needs demand that we do what we are doing and not leave manager production to chance," he said.

He said that was why the Government was actively training managers.

The setting up of the National Institute of Public Administration (Intan), the National Productivity Centre (NPC) and Mara Institute of Technology bore testimony to the Government's appreciation of managers and management.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said he was happy the private sector was also conscious of the role of management and the training of managers.

The alumni club with members from the private and public sectors would give trained managers from both sectors the opportunity to exchange views and experiences, he said.

The club would also seek to foster and develop greater exchange between those managing the public sector with those in the private sector.