

Dr M: Think of society's interest

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DATUK Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today called on professional associations in Malaysia to adopt the Western practice of sharing knowledge and having a code of ethics in the interest of society.

He said associations in this country "should look beyond the objective of safeguarding their interests but must consider the interest of society."

"Only safeguarding their self-interest is surely a limited and selfish objective.

"Every association is a part of common society and must take into consideration the interest of the people," said the Prime Minister at the Housing Developers Association annual dinner.

For example, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said, medical associations in Britain gave priority to the quality of their service rather than selfish motives.

Rules such as non-advertising, the Hippocratic Oath and non-divulging of patients' problems were some of the voluntary restrictions placed on members of the medical associations.

These restrictions were effective in that "whoever becomes a doc-

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tor gets the confidence of the people."

Comparing the medical system in the East, he said respect and confidence were not given just because a person entered the medical profession.

"In Malaysia, bomohs, dukuns and sinsehs are not respected until their capabilities have been recognised by the people for some time.

"Although there may be among them many who are respected, their profession does not get respect," he said.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said Western professional associations also stressed the importance of publication of research findings and new

inventions and knowledge.

However, in the East "if a person uncovers new knowledge, he will keep it a secret for his own use.

"Professional interest is not taken into consideration, let alone the interest of society.

"What is important is profits that he can obtain from new techniques, knowledge or inventions," he said.

The Prime Minister said this practice was far different from that in the West where every invention or research was publicised in the profession.

"If protection is needed, it is given in the form of copyright."

"In view of the benefits that can be obtained from the practices and principles of

Western professional associations, I hope this attitudes and stand will be adopted by all associations in Malaysia," he said.

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Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said there was also a need for every profession to have its code of ethics.

"This code is needed for the profession to safeguard its image and respect.

"To ensure that this code of ethics is effective, the profession must have the capability of disciplining its members and the body that is chosen to enforce this code must be honest and sincere and not act in the interest of certain parties," said the Prime Minister.

He said professional associations must also emphasize service to the public.

"Professional associations are not unions.

"Threats of causing hardship to the people due to unsatisfactory reception to any demand must not be supported or practised by profes-

sional associations.

"On the other hand, associations must take disciplinary action against any member who disgraces the good name of the profession or is irresponsible to the public," said Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir.

He also called on professional associations to improve the knowledge of their members by having publications, seminars and management courses.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said the Government considered the private sector as partners in development and "any obstacle in the way is not a policy of the Government."

He agreed that there were a number of administrative problems that affected the building of houses.

"The Government is ready to discuss and solve the problem but the HDA itself must be willing to solve some of the problems."

He hoped developers would not place too much emphasis on big profits to an extent that the interests of the people and the country were put aside.