

Unity is vital to nation, says Mahathir

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ALOR STAR, Sar. — Racial unity is vital in ensuring the nation's strength and integrity as well as continued development, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

He believed the people realised the importance of solidarity which had helped make a success of development programmes, *Bernama* quoted him as saying.

If each community acted in isolation, it would not be contributing to national growth but would be weakening the country, he said when opening the Menara Peladang here owned by the Syarikat Perniagaan Peladang Mada.

Dr Mahathir described the building as a symbol of the unity and co-operation within the farming community and a reflection of the prevailing situation in the country.

He said the farming community represented Malaysia's strength and because of that, the Government always gave attention to efforts to improve their standard of living.

Present were Datin Dr Siti Hasmah Ali, Agriculture Minister Datuk Seri Sanusi Junid, Syarikat Perniagaan Peladang Mada chairman Datuk Seri Syed Nahar Shahabuddin, Menteri Besar Datuk Paduka Haji Osman Aroff, and Perlis Menteri Besar Datuk Haji Ali Ahmad.

The company was set up in 1975 and has a paid-up capital of \$2 million. Twenty-seven farmers' organisations in the Mada area have a stake in the company, whose activities include importing, processing and distributing fertilisers and acting as a Petronas agent for the distribution of gas and urea fertiliser. It is also involved in housing development.

The Menara Peladang was completed in March at a cost of \$9 million.

At the Parents' Day celebrations at Sekolah Menengah Batu 20, in Kodiang, near here this morning, Dr Mahathir said parents and teachers have to develop the character of school children — be they Chinese, Malays or Indians — to become a model Malaysian race.

"We were not born as a race. We were born children. Good values and char-

acteristics and awareness of race are moulded by parents first and later teachers.

"If our children are going to get good values and consider themselves Malaysians they have to be taught this from young at home and at school," he said.

Dr Mahathir said sometimes children born to Malays as Muslims are not necessarily Muslim Malays.

"They become Muslims and believe in Islam through education at home and at school.

"The process of moulding does not depend on subjects like mathematics and geography. If a parent or teacher propagates good values, the child will be good and if he is taught bad values he will be bad," he said.

Dr Mahathir said parents and teachers should follow the "leadership by exam-

ple" slogan.

He also said teachers should not be involved in politics and teach their pupils by their political values and standards.

As an example, Dr Mahathir said that when he was young he believed the world was flat.

"But when I grew up and when people said the world was round it took me a long time to believe this. Therefore a belief is very important. Once we believe in something we do not question logic anymore."

He said if a person believes in God, it doesn't matter to him how God looks like and where God is.

Dr Mahathir later visited Barisan Nasional campaign centres in his Kubang Pasu constituency.

He will cast his vote here before leaving for Kuala Lumpur tomorrow.