

# THUMBS UP FOR PETTY TRADERS

**By NURAINA SAMAD**

**KUALA LUMPUR, Sat.** — Hawking and petty trading are vital features in the country's economy as they represent self-employment besides providing a service in terms of cheap goods, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

The Prime Minister said they had also become a part of the Malaysian way of life which tourists find attractive.

It was because of this that the Government had always been supportive of them.

He said: "The Government has never been in the way of hawkers and petty traders.

"Despite the fact that some may have had problems with the local authorities, we have found most of them to be law-abiding.

"While we acknowledge the importance and contribution of hawkers and petty traders we, however, need their co-operation in helping to enhance the country's image as a cheap and attractive tourist destination," he added.

Opening the biennial delegates conference of the Federation of Hawkers and Petty Traders Associations this afternoon, the Prime Minister called on hawkers and petty traders to keep their stalls and premises clean.

"Because tourists are attracted to this aspect of Malaysian life, hawkers and petty traders should keep their stalls clean. In this way, they can help boost the image of our country among tourists," he said.

He added that this was particularly relevant at this juncture as Malaysia is hosting the Peta conference next month.

Dr Mahathir said the Government had allocated \$30 million to enable State Governments to increase the number of sites for hawkers and petty traders.

The Government was now studying the possibility of introducing a loan scheme for hawkers and petty traders, he said.

He added that this scheme would benefit hawkers and petty traders of all races.

Dr Mahathir said the Government considered hawking and petty trading as a way of eradicating poverty and added that in times of economic slowdown, the jobless were encouraged to turn to self-employment such as hawking and petty trading.