

Mahathir on why unity is so vital to Malays

MALACCA, Sat. — The Malay community needs to unite and consolidate itself to maintain its strength for the future, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

The Prime Minister said there was also an urgent need to instil this awareness for unity among the Malays.

"Nothing can be worst for the future of the Malay community than disunity," Dr Mahathir said when opening the Federation of Malay Hawkers and Petty Traders Associations (FMHPTA) annual general meeting at the Air Keroh Expo Centre here.

Dr Mahathir, who was earlier given pledges of support by the organisation, said the Malays were weak compared to the other communities.

He said the present leadership was geared towards uniting and moulding them into a strong and respected race.

"But if weak people are made to be divided among themselves, as is being done by some quarters, what will happen to them?" he asked.

Dr Mahathir said the present leadership had a lot more to do to lift the economic standing of the Malay community.

"Our aim is to unite and strengthen the Malays so that they can once again be looked up to and respected as they were during the Malacca Sultanate," he added.

He urged Malay petty traders and hawkers to acquire the necessary skills before asking for loans to venture into bigger businesses.

Dr Mahathir said the Government did not want to just give the Malays financial help because it did not want them to be weak and dependent.

Citing bodybuilder Malek Nor as an example, he said the muscleman would not be strong

as he was if he did not train and exercise hard enough.

"A lot of people may have the same weight as him but not as strong if they had not trained as hard," he said.

Dr Mahathir said it would be futile to give loans to people who did not know how to do business.

"The Government wants the Malays to learn and succeed with or without our help," he said.

He said many Malay businessmen who once owned Rolls Royces, had ended up poorer

than when they started because of their loans.

"We are careful about giving these loans. What we are saying now is that if you cannot afford to pay, don't borrow," he added.

Dr Mahathir also criticised businessmen who misused the loans and those who refused to repay their loans to banks and financial institutions.

He said trust was an essential ingredient for doing business.

"If you do not pay back, the banks would be reluctant to lend money to other traders because of the bad experience," he said.