

Dr M wants study on Malay civilisation

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KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. — Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad wants a study of Malay civilisation to be carried out with "intellectual honesty."

The Prime Minister said the study, which should also look beyond the present, must not be concerned only with achievements of the Malays but should cover their shortcomings as well.

"There is nothing worse than to omit certain shortcomings because of sentiment, conceit or false pride," he said when opening the Second International Conference on Malay Civilisation here.

If Malay civilisation was no longer in its Golden Age, it was mainly because worthless values had been inherited. Dr Mahathir said.

"The challenge facing us, if we wish to achieve a similar golden age, is to be brave in changing certain values that are stifling our

progress," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the route to success was not the same as in the past because the Malays could no longer isolate themselves from the rest of the world.

He said the communications system had improved to such an extent that the world had become a "global village" where every fault and weakness of the community was easily exposed to others.

He said it was important that the Malays, in trying to preserve their heritage, did not fall behind the others.

"We must be prepared to accept the Malay heritage with a willingness to face all challenges and readiness to absorb new values even though the new elements will make our present civilisation somewhat different from the past," he said.

The Prime Minister said the Malay ethnic group, found in Malaysia and

South-East Asia and islands across the Indian and Pacific Oceans, had a civilisation that was very advanced.

Although not all the Malay groups had the same level of civilisation, some were as advanced as the civilisation of the Middle East and the Mediterranean, he said.

Despite this, he said, the Malay civilisation could not defend itself against "Western attacks and influence."

Dr Mahathir said the Western forces were not only able to seize Malay territories but also managed to erode or destroy certain values of the Malays to the extent that the Malays themselves forgo about various aspects of their own civilisation and thought that everything about them were worthless.

"The question now is whether the influence of the West on the Malays has been good or bad," he said.