

Productive co-operation the key to progress, says PM

KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. — Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad launched the Malaysian Business Council today and stressed the importance of productive co-operation between the public and private sectors.

They must make Malaysia an advanced country on par with those in Europe and North America, said the Prime Minister.

"It may not happen tomorrow or next year or even by the end of this millennium but we must not be discouraged. Everything has a beginning," he said.

And the council, set up to strengthen ties between the two sectors, could help achieve the target, he said.

The council, headed by Dr Mahathir, comprises nine ministers, eight representatives from the public service and 44 from the private sector.

Dr Mahathir said there must be a joint effort in fighting collaboration that had resulted in negative social consequences and frustrated the achievement of national

values and aspirations.

"In many areas, there must be more than an arm's length relationship. On many issues, there must be productive regulation," he said.

What was good for the business sector might not be good for the people as a whole, he added.

On the Malaysia Incorporated concept, Dr Mahathir said it was based on a partnership between the Government and the private sector, where both had a common task of ensuring its success in order to share the benefits.

He said that despite initial criticism, the idea had caught on and today government officers were more helpful towards the private sector and constantly improving service through innovative ways.

"They now accept and appreciate that the private sector does not only make profits for itself but contribute towards economic growth and, therefore, towards the betterment of all."

Dr Mahathir said the private sector must not

only expect better services from the Government but must also contribute towards its realisation.

"They must make it easier for the Government to serve them by understanding the Government's regulatory role and its concern for social and economic justice for all," he added.

The Prime Minister called for new standards to be set and to make quantum leaps to quicken the attainment of the nation's goals.

"Above all, we must understand our goal and the road towards it. We, here, means all of us — the Government, the private sector, workers, management and all the institutions which are directly or indirectly involved in the development of the nation."

He said the national aspiration must be shared by all and it was "not a grandiose dream that we are aiming at."

Dr Mahathir urged council members to be frank to allow in-depth examination and discus-

sions. "We cannot remove misunderstanding and roadblocks to productive co-operation if we fail to communicate clearly.

"If practical options and strategies are to come forth, there must be free and frank exchange of information and ideas," he added.

He said the council was a small one because it was essential that the members could discuss in an atmosphere of candour and intimacy "but membership might be increased if necessary.

Dr Mahathir said that to ensure the necessary administrative back-up, the Government had set up a Centre for Economic Research and Services to be located at the Institute of Strategic and International Studies, with adequate staffing.

He said the centre would be responsible for research, secretarial, organisational and administrative services for the council.

The Government had allocated an annual sum for the operational costs of the council, he said.