

NATION'S FOUNDATION

PM: Villages to be developed to achieve 2020 target

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SEREMBAN, Sun. — Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has described villages as the foundation of a country and said they will be developed systematically to help Malaysia achieve the developed nation status by the year 2020.

"A country cannot exist with only towns because the beginnings of any town stem from a kampung.

"Although almost all kampungs started by coincidence, it does not mean they cannot be developed and must be left out of the mainstream of development," the Prime Minister said.

He said developing towns alone would be meaningless if the kampungs remained undeveloped as this would also create discontent among the villagers.

He also said that kampung folk must not be idle but must work hard and be committed to government-initiated development programmes if their living standard was to improve.

"The Government wants development in all kampungs to be equal with that in other nations. For this the Government needs funds which are collected through taxes."

But Dr Mahathir pointed out that funds and well thought out projects alone could not change the lives of kampung people.

"Among the necessary ingredients are hard work and commitment of the people and education," he said when launching the Negri Sembilan state-level *Kampungku* programme at Kampung Jimah Baru, 20km from here.

Among the 10,000 people who attended the launching were Datuk Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Ali, Menteri Besar Datuk Haji Mohamed Isa Abdul Samad, Information Minister Datuk Mohamed Rahmat and National Unity

and Social Development Minister Datuk Napsiah Omar.

The event was televised live by RTM.

Dr Mahathir took to task those who claimed that the Government's rural projects were slowly eliminating kampung traditions.

"If tradition means living in dilapidated homes without basic amenities then it is a tradition not worth holding on to."

Dr Mahathir said government projects were designed with the people's future and well-being in mind.

"Our future depends on what we do today. If we cannot improve ourselves we will not be able to compete with other nations.

"It is not impossible to develop bit by bit if the projects are properly planned and followed systematically.

"God willing, we will be a developed nation by the year 2020," he said, adding that Malaysia's track record as one of the fastest developing nations was clear proof of the Government's and people's commitment.