

Call to Malays to perform 'jihad'

THE task of developing a 21st century Malay and Bumiputera community, strong in faith and morals, as well as high in competence and discipline, should be treated as a form of *jihad*, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said.

"It's *jihad* because it is an honourable task that will save the faith of the Bumiputera Muslims and, indirectly, other Muslims. The misconception that Islam has brought weaknesses, poverty and backwardness can be dispelled only when Muslims are capable of competing with non-Muslims.

"The Malays are capable of regaining the respect of others and becoming a model race for other Muslims. It's a huge task, but one which the Malays must pursue seriously," the Prime Minister said.

He made this call to Umno members in his address at the party's general assembly in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir, who is Umno president, said there is no time for the Malays to entertain interpretations by certain political organisations that Muslims should pursue only life in the hereafter, even at the expense of their well-being in this world.

"If the Malays can ignore these interpretations, which are made by those who want to undermine Islam, we believe that the Malays can compete with the other races. What they need is to develop positive attitude and culture," he added.

The Prime Minister said these prophets of doom have

gone to the extent of labelling the country's vision to become developed by 2020 as the "doomsday vision". These politicians want to lead the people to believe that Vision 2020 is a materialistic vision. "What they are doing is to try and weaken the spirit of the Malays," he added.

He expressed regret that

certain Malays do not feel obliged to help spread Islam and develop the well-being of the Muslims. "They are too preoccupied with preparations for a place for themselves in the afterlife. Achievements in this world are totally ignored by them. Indirectly, they hamper the progress of Islam."