

It's just not good enough, PM tells Mara

By WONG CHUN WAI

KUALA LUMPUR: Prime Minister Datuk Serr Dr Mahathir Mohamad wants Mara to review its role and set a goal as its achievements so far have been unsatisfactory.

He said Mara's achievements were not proportionate to the amount of money spent on it by the Government.

The agency, he said, should be more serious in its efforts to develop bumiputras in the socio-economic sector, especially in entrepreneurship.

"If the same amount of money and training were given to non-bumiputras, they would definitely have left the bumiputras further behind," he said when launching Mara's 25th anniversary celebrations.

Dr Mahathir advised Mara to lay more emphasis on business ethics in their training and guidance programmes.

Capital and qualifications without understanding business ethics would not help bumiputra entrepreneurs, he said.

"The successful non-bumiputras are not those who score many distinctions (in school examinations). Some cannot even converse well but they become millionaires," he said.

Dr Mahathir said he wanted Mara to conduct a course on ethics for scholarship holders.

He also advised Mara to mould entrepreneurs with qualities suited for business and who keep to their promises, especially in repaying loans.

He chided those who had the notion that Mara loans need not be repaid.

Dr Mahathir said the attitude was especially common among those who took study loans.

"Once you fail to repay the money, you will not be able to get another loan to continue with your business," he said.

There were also entrepreneurs who relied on capital and chance in their ventures, he said, adding that the number of people who succeeded in this manner was small.

Some entrepreneurs, he said, lacked the capital and skill but wanted to carry out big businesses.

"It's like if you only have the capital to sell kacang putih, but you want to sell Proton Sagas," he added.

Dr Mahathir said bumiputra entrepreneurs should acknowledge the reality of business by comparing their position with that of the other races.

He said many bumiputras still believed that capital alone would bring them success in business and had borrowed huge loans with the hope of making huge profits.

"Unfortunately, when their business fails, they cannot repay the money, causing them to move back two steps instead of going forward," he added.

Dr Mahathir said there was no use in constantly-engaging consultants to study the weaknesses of bumiputras when the community itself knew the reasons.

He urged bumiputras not to rely on others to help them achieve success, but to rectify their own weaknesses.

"For example, you cannot even find a good Malay restaurant on par with the progress of the country. If you go to a hotel, you will find Chinese, Japanese, Western and Italian restaurants but not a Malay restaurant," he said.

Dr Mahathir said nasi lemak might be served in the hotels as part of the breakfast menu, but there was no posh Malay restaurant.

"There is no place where one can dress up, for example, to wear a bow-tie, for a Malay dinner. Does it mean that one must only sit on the floor to eat Malay food?" he asked.

Dr Mahathir also advised Institut Teknologi Mara (ITM) students to concentrate on their studies instead of indulging in non-beneficial activities, adding that they should not

waste the people's money.

At one time, he said, the Government faced a lot of problems from ITM students because the main activity of the students was to hold demonstrations.

"If that is what they want, the Government can have a school for demonstrations," he quipped.

Earlier, Mara chairman Tamrin Ghafar said 80 per cent of the financial allocation received by Mara went to education and training.

He said that although the investments were not in the form of monetary gains, the rewards were in the form of manpower development.

Former Prime Minister, the late Tun Abdul Razak, was posthumously awarded the Tokoh Mara award.

Dr Mahathir presented the award to Tun Hajjah Rahah Mohamed Noah, Tun Razak's widow.