

PM: Time not right for single mart

PETALING JAYA: It is not possible for Islamic countries to form a common market because they are still dependent on other countries, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir Mohamad.

"The Islamic countries are still dependent on others and if we try to cut ourselves off from the rest of the world, then we will be poorer because of that," he said.

He said Islamic countries must continue to communicate and trade with the rest of the world until a time when they

were able to master and excel in technologies required to develop economies.

"An Islamic common market at this moment is not practical and we must not allow ourselves to be moved by sentiments.

"We must calculate and assess our strength and determine what is good and what is bad for us," he said at a dialogue with students of the International Islamic University yesterday.

The Prime Minister had the dialogue before closing the university's sev-

enth convocation.

He said that it was possible for Islamic nations to work not only in economy but also in other fields.

Citing Opec as an example, he said since a number of Islamic countries were producing oil, they had to sell the commodity to other nations.

"We cannot sell off to each other as Islamic countries are the major producers of this commodity.

"Even Islamic members in Opec cannot even

persuade each other to cut back on production," he said.

Responding to a question concerning the qualities required of a good leader, Dr Mahathir said a good leader must not only be progressive but also creative.

He said that those out for short-term gains were susceptible and "easily corrupted."

"Those who use money to gain support in an election must remember that the people they give to will ask for more and more while they (the leaders) will have less and less to give.

"The future will not be bright for the country (with such leaders)," he added.

Asked about the need for Muslim countries to develop military might, Dr Mahathir said without the required knowledge and technology this would be useless.

"With money, you can only buy the weapons from others but you do not even have the knowledge to make or to improve on it," he said.