

PM urges hawkers to aim for markets worldwide

By Jeffrey Ramayah

KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. — Local food like *nasi lemak*, *satay* and *mamak mee* have the potential of tapping worldwide markets through the franchise system, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

Citing McDonald's as an example, the Prime Minister said it was a business which had succeeded in the world although it started off as a small hamburger shop in a rural area.

"People who have never eaten hamburgers and those who love *nasi lemak* have become patrons of hamburger outlets," he said when launching the Hawkers Day celebrations and the Hawkers Convention here.

He said he saw no reason why local food could not be franchised and marketed and added that hawkers in the country must set themselves targets to achieve.

Dr Mahathir said with rapid development taking place, the "hawker" in the true sense had ceased to exist as such a group of people had gone on to become petty traders or small businessmen.

He said gone were the days when hawkers went to the villages and sold their foodstuff and other goods, or by the road.

He said today, such people had their own stalls and shops in both urban and rural areas and added that he hoped that such development would be followed by greater successes as the country continued to develop.

Dr Mahathir advised hawkers and stallholders to be prepared to keep abreast with the changing times by upgrading their business standards to cater to the taste and means of customers.

"It is not impossible that one day, probably by the year 2020, hawkers and temporary roadside stalls may disappear because they do not have customers.

"With prosperity, customers will want more style," he said.

Dr Mahathir said to face the rapid changes that were occurring, hawkers and petty traders must upgrade the standards of their stalls and conduct business in a more orderly manner by adopting modern business techniques.

The Prime Minister said as in other businesses, the question of capital was a stumbling block to hawkers and petty traders and added that the Government would look into the matter.

He said the Government would continue to help hawkers and petty traders and added that the Credit Guarantee Corporation could review the present conditions and credit limit to suit the current situation.

But Dr Mahathir stressed that hawkers must be responsible and not use the loans for matters not related to their business.

He said the contribution by hawkers and petty traders to the country's economy was not small as without them the objective of zero

Stallholders advised against turning to loan sharks

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inflation or low inflation could not be achieved.

Speaking to reporters later, Dr Mahathir said petty traders should be patient and reap the benefits of government and private sector loan schemes instead of resorting to loan sharks whose interest rates were much higher.

He said the government and private sector loan schemes and financial aid to petty traders would, of course, take some time as they had to go through the formal processes but the interest rates were low.

"But if the traders are in a hurry and want cash immediately, they have to face the risk of seeking loans from loan sharks.

"The traders not only have to pay very high interest rates but also face the risk of their property being damaged by such unscrupulous people," he added.

However, the Prime Minister added that obtaining loans and assistance from banks and the Government was quite a slow process and might pose problems to petty traders.

But resorting to loan sharks could pose bigger problems, he said, not only posed by the high interest rates but the risks of being harassed and threatened.

Dr Mahathir said the Government had allocated RM400 million to assist petty traders and added that they would have to wait for some time as certain procedures had to be followed.

To a question, Dr Mahathir said it was sad that some Malaysian petty traders had sold their business licences or permits to foreigners.

He said such licences were meant for Malaysians to trade and not for foreigners.

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