

# 'Malays must strive harder'

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GENTING HIGHLANDS: The Government has a problem filling 55% of university places with Malay students because their qualifications are not high enough, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said.

Often, Chinese students who had better results had to be rejected, the Prime Minister said.

"The performance of Malay students is poor because, on being enrolled into the universities, they do not put their time and energy on their studies but, instead, get involved in other activities.

"Disclosing this may hurt the feelings of certain quarters but this differing culture between the Chinese and Malays is the reason the New Economic Policy was difficult to achieve," he said, when opening the National Education Convention 2001 at Institut Aminuddin Baki, here, yesterday.

"Eager to get rich quick, shares, licences, permits, logging areas and others are immediately sold to other people (by the Malays).

"Despite having to bear the cost of such purchases they (other people) were still able

to reap profits and be successful," he said.

Dr Mahathir said in Malaysia the cultural difference between the Malays and the Chinese was very clear.

While Chinese culture placed knowledge on a high pedestal, the Malay culture did not value it as much.

Dr Mahathir said although the Malays were given more opportunities, they did not pursue knowledge as persistently as the Chinese to the extent that Chinese parents were prepared to sacrifice much of their earnings towards their children's education.

He conceded, however, that

there were Malay parents who also acted in that way but the number was small.

Dr Mahathir said this aside the Chinese adopted values taught by Confucius in their daily lives and these values formed a character which brought them success.

He said Islam gives much

guidance on living values but the majority did not seem to practise these values.

"Muslims are told to pursue knowledge all the way to China but the Malays are not willing to take challenges which Muslims during the time of the Prophet (Muhammad) dared to do in their quest if it even took them to China."

In seeking a balance of performance among the different races in Malaysia, values and cultures which impede progress must be eradicated, he said.

For the young Malays, they must be introduced to and coached on Islamic values.

"Nothing in Islam can make us lose out if we, on our own will, do not misuse Islamic teachings," he added.

Dr Mahathir said educators play a vital role in inculcating such values as they are trained and involved in the development of a student's character over a long period.

"Educators are not only responsible in providing knowledge but also in inculcating in their students a noble character, values and cultures tuned for success," he said.