

Be ready to adapt to changes, PM tells ex-servicemen

By NICK LEONG

PUTRAJAYA: The Government is indebted to ex-servicemen for their contribution to the country but cannot help every one of them, says Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Even if the Government decided to help some of them, he said, it would not succeed without their co-operation.

"We have lots of plans to help them but sometimes they fail because of our shortcomings and sometimes because they are not willing to adapt."

Dr Mahathir said ex-servicemen should continue to contribute to society by maintaining their discipline in whatever they do.

He said the discipline instilled in them would serve them well when they retire.

He said the Government could train ex-servicemen with new skills and find job opportunities for them.

Speaking to some 500 ex-servicemen at a get-together here yesterday, Dr Mahathir said some former army personnel were dissatisfied because they felt they were not treated properly.

"There are so many of you, so the Government cannot

help every one. But if we work hard, I believe you will succeed," he added.

To a question, Dr Mahathir said although the minimal wages of the armed forces at RM400 was comparatively low, it was compensated with a variety of allowances.

Malaysia Ex-Servicemen Association president Datuk Muhammad Ghani said the association had about 200,000

members but another 70,000 ex-servicemen were not registered with the association.

Earlier, Dr Mahathir said he did not doubt the ability of the Malays to succeed but what they needed was to adopt good and positive values like discipline and unity.

"If we do not acknowledge our mistake and learn from it, we will never progress."

He said Malays should look

at their own shortcomings instead of blaming others for their failures.

Asked if he believed the Malays were too mollycoddled, Dr Mahathir said some were taking things for granted.

"We gave scholarships, quotas, special courses and all kinds of special treatment to improve the ability of Malays but if they do not want to, we will not succeed," he said.