

Time for soul-searching

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■ By FREDERICK FERNANDEZ

SHAH ALAM: The Malays must ask themselves why they still remain backward and poor despite being accorded special privileges by the Government in the last 43 years.

Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the Malays would remain weak economically and academically if they continued to depend on the Government to compete for business opportunities and secure places in universities.

Dr Mahathir said Umno's main agenda item was to champion the cause of the Ma-

lay race, Islam and the nation but the struggle to uplift the status of the Malays had been unsuccessful.

"We must ask ourselves why we are still lagging behind compared to the other races.

"Why are we still demanding discounts and subsidies from the Government when it comes to obtaining land, houses and business deals? Has the Government not done enough for them?" he said when addressing delegates of the 10th Umno Selangor convention at the Grand Blue Wave Hotel here yesterday.

He said the crux of the problem was because the Ma-

lays were always hoping for others to do something for them and this mentality must be discarded with immediate effect.

Later at a press conference, Dr Mahathir said each time there was a party convention or gathering of bumiputra entrepreneurs, they would send numerous resolutions urging the Government to increase aid and assistance for the Malays but they failed to examine the root of their problem.

"Forget about creating records on the number of resolutions raised or what more the Government should do to help the Malays. It is better to ask themselves why they are still

behind in economy and education," he said.

He said that it was regrettable that when the Government handed out free fertilisers to Malay farmers, they in turn sold the fertilisers.

The opposition, he said, had alleged that Malay padi farmers made very little returns from their crops because the Government failed to increase the price.

The Prime Minister said he saw no reason why the farmers could not carry out some small-scale business to supplement their income.

"But instead they prefer to attend PAS *ceramahs* which criticise every good thing the

Government has done for the Malays," he said.

On education, Dr Mahathir regretted that while the Government lowered the entry level for university intake to accommodate more bumiputra students, they were busy holding demonstrations against the Government.

"You are in the university to study and uplift the status of your race, you are not put there to burn halls," he added.

Also present were Mentri Besar Datuk Seri Dr Mohamad Khir Toyo, Umno secretary-general Tan Sri Khalil Yaakob and state Umno liaison head Tan Sri Muhammad Muhammad Taib.