

Dr M: Inability to change Malays my biggest failure

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KAJANG: Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the biggest failure in his 20 years as Prime Minister was his inability to change the mindset of the Malays.

"I am sad that I will have to leave without succeeding to change the culture of the Malays. I have failed to change the Malay mind," he said in his speech at a Backbenchers Club dinner here last night.

He said although the Malays had good values, they did not practise them.

"For the Malays, working hard is a good value but in reality, they do not. It is not because they can't but they don't want to," he said.

He said Malays refused to

learn from the Chinese although they were good examples, adding that they had lived next door to the community for decades and yet refused to follow their way.

He said his efforts to change the Malays were also misconstrued as being materialistic by some people including student leaders.

"But we will not be less Malay if we change," he said.

Dr Mahathir also urged leaders not to struggle too hard to become Prime Minister as it was not something one could make elaborate plans for.

"I was quite surprised when I was appointed Prime Minister. I did not campaign and there was no conspiracy," he said, adding that it was fated.

"My advice is: Prepare yourself but don't struggle too hard. Don't step on people or give bribes," he said.

He said a prime minister's role was merely to administer the country but he would have to have an immense amount of ideas to bring about change and introduce new things.

He said a prime minister had to make quick decisions and be able to solve problems as they cropped up.

"You hope you make the right decision but occasionally you are wrong," he said.

Dr Mahathir said his biggest challenge was to tackle the economic slowdown in 1997 when he had to learn about finance, currency trading and share markets so that he could be on top of the problem.