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Lack of Malay traders in new townships, says PM

ALOR STAR, Thurs: Malay petty traders continue to lack proper business skills to the extent that many new townships do not have Malay representation in the various business, food and retail sectors, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

Despite help and funds from the federal government, Malay petty traders continue to lag behind their Chinese counterparts who dominate the business scenes in new townships.

Expressing concern that such a trend would see friction among the three major racial groups since there would not be an equal distribution from the economic cake, he said the government sees the need to correct this unhealthy trend.

But, most importantly, the Malay traders must respond to the challenges faced when trading and con-

ducting businesses, he said.

"Nowadays, in new townships, we only see Chinese opening up businesses. There are no Malays or Indian traders. This is unhealthy as Malaysia is a multi-racial country," he said after opening the 38th annual general meeting of the Pekan Rabu Cooperative here.

Mahathir, who was a trader at the famous bazaar in Alor Star some 58 years back, said the Malay traders must learn to develop proper business skills and discipline.

"They prefer to trade at the sidewalks. When can they learn to develop or open up businesses in shopping complexes?" he asked.

He said it has now become difficult for Malays to trade in new townships "as they have not reached the desired level where they can operate from concrete buildings".