

# 'Accept change for progress'

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REMBAU, Thurs: Malaysians will have to discard negative cultural traits and keep the positive ones in their pursuit for greater advancement as a nation.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said Malaysians will have to learn from other world cultures.

He is convinced that Malaysians can achieve greatness on a higher plane if there is willingness to part with counter-productive cultural traits.

Towards this end, it will be good if Malaysians can learn from the rise and fall of the Mongols, the Russians and even the Islamic empire.

"Take the Mongols for example. They were nomads who followed their livestock to make a living, but went on to conquer the world under the leadership of Genghis Khan," he said.

He was speaking after opening a four-day Kursus Bina Negara Perdana pro-

gramme at Kern Bina Negara in Sepri here today.

Mahathir said Genghis Khan succeeded in uniting the tribes and inspiring them to make their nation a strong one.

"They were only livestock breeders, but they became the strongest nation in the world once they learned to accept new culture and values," he added.

He cited as another example, the Russians under the leadership of Peter the Great, who managed to change their culture and become the world's strongest empire.

"The Russians at one time were a very backward nation. Peter the Great used his army and forced them to accept new values ... they succeeded in conquering the biggest and strongest empires," he said.

"Those leaders successfully brought change to their nations and inspired them with good values," he added.

The prime minister also cited the disintegration of the Islamic empire as an

example of downfall as a result of national disunity and orthodox cultural traits.

"The Muslims, for instance, were able to rule for 1,300 years over an empire

from capitals in the Middle East like Damascus and Baghdad and another in Istanbul.

"However, the empire declined and crumbled because of deep division

among Muslims who hung on to orthodox cultures.

"For example, Muslim soldiers were then not allowed to wear tight trousers and peak caps which are deemed *haram*

(prohibited).

"Moreover the soldiers also rejected the use of new weapons. Eventually the Muslims were beaten and Islam's empire crumbled," Mahathir said.