

Citizenship reward for foreigners

STAR 11 OCT 2002

By NICK LEONG

PETALING JAYA: Foreigners who have served the country with distinction will soon be given honorary citizenships.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the Government was looking into the matter such as the provisions under the law for the purpose.

"We don't know if we need to make some amendments to the law or not, or to make other provisions. We have to

be practical and see if people can do something which is good for Malaysia," he said after opening a conference on *Learning from South Korea: Sustaining Growth in a Dynamic Environment* here yesterday.

He said many countries conferred honorary citizenship to foreigners who had served them well.

Dr Mahathir said the Government was also willing to extend the stay of foreigners contributing to the country.

"Although they (foreigners) are only allowed to stay here for two years (continuously), we can extend (the duration) in recognition of their contribution," he added.

Earlier, during a question-and-answer session with participants of the conference, Dr Mahathir said the private sector should assist the Government in ensuring economic parity among races in the country.

He said the Government had been "a bit" successful in

getting the Malays to be less dependent on it for subsidies and contracts.

"But there are many (Malays) who complained that if they go to the private sector, they will never get any contracts. So they fall back on the Government," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the Government persisted with the Look East Policy despite the economic woes in Japan because it believed there was a lesson to be learned from the Japanese.

He said Japan wanted to change its culture and adopt western values.

He said the South Koreans succeeded in bouncing back from the economic crisis of 1997 because they "took pride in being Koreans."

"The Koreans are very much concerned about being Koreans. They work hard to ensure they remain Koreans," he said.

Commenting on the role of the mass media in the country, Dr Mahathir said the media

should expose wrongdoings "but they should also appreciate what has been done and what is right."

"The media can stimulate the economy and the people into doing all the right things but sometimes they tend to focus on controversies.

"Of course they want to sell advertisements, but when they become too self-centred, they are no better than the people they seek to expose," he said.