

# Mahathir: Have true partnerships

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**PETALING JAYA:** Overseas Chinese communities should be more visible in the nation-building process in their host countries to correct the perception that they are only interested in getting rich, said Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

The Prime Minister said by doing so, the communities would help correct the long-held stereotype that Overseas Chinese were only focused on amassing wealth rather than contributing to the socio-economic development of the host country.

"Whenever possible, they should have true partnerships with locals while the locals, on their part, must make serious attempts to learn and acquire the business and entrepreneurial skills of the Chinese," Dr Mahathir said when opening the Seventh World Chinese Entrepreneurs Convention here yesterday.

He said overseas Chinese must also work closely with the indigenous people of their host countries to reduce economic disparities between them.

"It would certainly contribute not only to the fair-sharing of the wealth released by Chinese entrepreneurship, but also help prevent the kind of incidents that

seem to be common in many countries of South-East Asia when the bad times came," he said.

Overseas Chinese were well known for their charity work and this could contribute towards greater social justice in their countries of adoption, he added.

Dr Mahathir said one had to admit that indigenous people had been unable to keep up with the evolution of business in the developed world.

Citing the example of East Africa, he said the Indians were forced to leave and the economies of countries in that region were not able to grow or even be sustained.

"Without the overseas Chinese, the economic situation in South-East Asia would not crumble as has happened in East Africa but it certainly would not be as dynamic as it is now," he added.

Dr Mahathir said although the dynamism of South-East Asian countries before the 1997 currency crisis had benefited everyone, the disparity between indigenous people and overseas Chinese remained.

"In Malaysia at least, the policies to uplift the indigenous people have result-

ed in poverty among them being reduced to negligible numbers," he added.

Given time, the disparity between the two would diminish, he said.

Earlier in his welcome address, Associated Chinese Chambers of Commerce and Industry Malaysia (ACC-CIM) president Tan Sri Lim Guan Teik said in today's globalised environment, ethnic Chinese entrepreneurs should not keep to themselves.

"In fact, enterprises of ethnic Chinese origin have become an integral part of the national economy of the country or region where they belong," said Lim, who is also chairman of the convention organising committee.

He added that the Chinese, particularly in Malaysia and South-East Asia, had been participating in the development and progress, and had contributed immensely in the economic, political and social development in their countries of adoption.

"Greater collaboration among Chinese entrepreneurs internationally is instrumental in bringing economic benefit and prosperity to all nations and nationalities," he added.