

Too much stress on paper passes, says Mahathir

KUALA LUMPUR, Saturday.

EDUCATION Minister Dr. Mahathir Mohamed said tonight that Malaysian society regarded formal education as a status symbol. It also placed too much value on paper qualifications.

There was also opposition to the numerous examinations at school level, he said in a talk on "Education and Us", over Television Malaysia.

Dr. Mahathir said value should be given to certificates and degrees, but society should not regard them as the only yardstick in evaluating a person's capabilities.

He added: "There is no guarantee that a degree holder would be able to do his job successfully.

"We can only say that his chances of succeeding are greater than a non-degree holder. There is still the possibility that he will be worse than a person without a degree."

Inability to complete formal education, he said,

should not be taken as failure but rather as a challenge.

Given the perseverance, success could still be within reach.

"If we can accept the fact that education does not end in the school, then the disappointment over a child's failure at any stage will not be that great."

He reminded that not all

who were successful in this world had university qualifications. The majority of them did not even have secondary education.

Dr. Mahathir added that if all Malaysians could view formal education and "education through experience" in the proper perspective, the present school system would not disappoint a quarter.

His talk was to explain the "aim of education and the role of formal education in providing education to society."

"This explanation is necessary because of evidence we have that society regards formal education as a status symbol and over emphasises the value of certificates and degrees," he said.

Dr. Mahathir spoke of the limitations of the school system "because the pupils' abilities differ and cannot be made similar".

The school system could not be 100 per cent effective and its effects were not similar on every child, he said.

Still useful

Formal schooling could bring about better results compared to studies on a part-time basis, but there would still be children who

would not fully benefit from it.

Dr. Mahathir said the problem to consider was: "What to do if a pupil no longer has the capacity to further his studies?"

Despite this, formal schooling could still be useful as the child could still benefit from the school atmosphere. This would help him adjust to life rather than become a social misfit.

Granted this, Dr. Mahathir added, the ensuing problem would be to determine the extent to which facilities were provided to the child or the "cut-off" point.

Society might be prepared to bear the burden of \$200 a year for every child in the primary level but it would not want to spend \$4,000 a year for those in the university stage.

Dr. Mahathir spoke of the dilemma in arriving at a decision as there was no perfect or absolute solution.

If the answer was to have a test, what should the passing mark be?

If it was 50, there would be great disappointment for pupils who obtain 49 marks.

Dr. Mahathir said if the authorities gave in to demands by parents to accept 49 as the "cut-off" point, there would be new demands from those with 48 marks, and so on.