

# Need for joint efforts on discipline in schools...

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**KUALA LUMPUR, FRI.** — Worsening discipline among the young can be tackled only through a concerted effort from teachers, school authorities and parents, Deputy Prime Minister and Education Minister **Dr. Mahathir Mohamed** said.

Opening a seminar on discipline in secondary schools organised by the Selangor Education Department here yesterday, he said: "There are signs indicating that discipline in some schools is unsatisfactory and can worsen if neglected.

"The cases of truancy recently reported in the papers and the extensive involvement of pupils in drug abuse are signs that the discipline of our young is in urgent need of proper attention from all groups concerned."

He added that in schools good discipline depended on a high standard of teaching, school administration and management.

Poor teaching methods caused boredom among the pupils and led to disciplinary problems. Such problems also arose from defective administration and management.

Discipline also depended on home conditions and parental attitudes. Some parents placed importance on discipline, urging teachers to cane their children where necessary. Others had negative attitudes and lodged complaints when schools took disciplinary action against their children.

Dr. Mahathir urged parents and teachers to work together in disciplining children. This should be practicable, particularly as the

Ministry had made it compulsory for all schools to set up parent-teacher associations.

He said: "I take a very serious view of the matter. Poor discipline in schools means proper learning cannot take place and the pupils' progress is not ensured. What will the consequences be to our nation if large numbers of the young have insufficient education and are not guided by rules and norms in their activities?"

## Social problem

"Obviously they will become a social problem. Their energies cannot be productively used as they lack qualified and skills. This can lead to unemployment and adversely affect national development efforts."

School heads must have a clear idea of the direction in which they wished to lead the teachers and the pupils in their charge. Without this, there could be no efficient administration.

Similarly, teachers should know exactly what the objectives of each lesson were and have a good command of subjects they taught and the teaching techniques used. Too harsh an approach to discipline should be avoided as this could have the opposite of the desired effect.

Dr. Mahathir said it was important that teachers made a study of the social, economic and cultural background and the physical and mental development of each pupil.

"They should bear in mind that pupils come from widely different backgrounds. Those from well-to-do families are different from those who come from less fortunate backgrounds," he said.

"Those from homes equipped with all material facilities are different from

those who come from slum conditions, for instance those from squatter areas. Those with Malay ancestry are different from those with Chinese or Indian ancestries."

Dr. Mahathir said that discipline was essential in all aspects of life if anything was to be achieved. If an organisation lacked discipline, its members would fail in their undertakings and its very strength and integrity would be threatened.

If a department, say a Government department, lacked discipline, its administration would become weak and it would not be able to give proper service to the public. This might ultimately result in a loss of faith in the entire Government service.

Youngsters who lacked discipline were vulnerable to bad influence for example from anti-national elements and drug-abusers. Homes without discipline could not offer their occupants peace of mind, causing them to seek it outside in the form of drugs and other vices.

## General good

"While we may all agree on the importance of discipline, we may differ on what is good discipline. Some may hold that good discipline is when pupils sit still and silent in class, never even whispering," he said.

"Others may argue that a class where the pupils move and speak quietly is disciplined so long as the learning process is not disturbed.

"There are many other criteria and interpretations relating to discipline. But this much we will agree: that the pupils must have the consciousness and the determination to do sincerely what is right for the general good which is also the individual good."