

AT THE PETRONAS MANAGEMENT ETHICS SEMINAR

# PM: Emphasise

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# ethics, morality

By Nor Hawa Yunus

BANGI, Tues. — Institutions of higher learning should give emphasis to ethics to ensure a high standard of morality in future generations, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir Mohamad said.

He said until now, tertiary educational institutions only stressed on academic achievement without paying any attention to moral quality.

"The time has come that emphasis be given to ethics and testing methods to determine the moral quality of graduates," he said when opening the Petronas Management Ethics Seminar (Permata) at the Petronas training centre.

About 150 senior civil servants, captains of industries and intellectuals are attending the two-day seminar jointly organised by Universiti Utara Malaysia and Petronas.

Dr Mahathir said educational institutions had an important responsibility in producing future managers, political and corporate leaders who are ethical and with high morals.

He cautioned that if graduates were not equipped with good ethics, they would misuse their expertise because they would be motivated by greed, self-importance,

arrogance and power.

In fact, he said, experts were more prone to malpractices because of the knowledge they have acquired.

"In addition, they know their trade inside-out and the weaknesses inherent in that field. Therefore, it is necessary that they have high ethical standards and awareness, to protect themselves from negative influences."

He said that in the effort to instil good ethical values, students must be made aware that corporate bodies, where they would be working with, would also be socially accountable for the power they wield.

"This power which has implication on shareholders, clients and the public at large should be exercised properly and not abused. In short, society expects big corporate bodies to behave or act responsibly and be ethical."

To emphasise his point, Dr Mahathir quoted Konosuke Matsu-shita in his book *As I See It*: "State control or socialism is not the answer ... external constraints (when) strictly enforced can be counter productive — what we need is self-discipline, an internal code of behaviour to which the whole industry pledges itself."

Dr Mahathir also spoke at length on the importance of ethics and good management and their

implications on society.

Unfortunately, he said, there were some who believed that ethics were unnecessary in certain fields like business.

"It seems, cheating occurred because profits could only be acquired through such means. Therefore, if one can cheat, he should cheat.

"With that, debts need not be repaid. Payments to suppliers or sub-contractors are misappropriated. Poor quality materials are used to reap higher profits and other abuses are practised."

Dr Mahathir said that as a result of this belief, these people lost their credibility and that banks would stop giving loans. They would be awarded contract only once.

More importantly, he said, because of a handful of untrustworthy people from a particular race, the entire business community from that race was penalised.

As a result, loans were withheld and contract would not be given because the whole business community from that particular ethnic group becomes suspect.

"The entire race will fail. That is the extent of the effect of being unethical."

Dr Mahathir also spoke of the need for a social group to be organised to ensure its continued existence.