

# Dr M: Society and groups must adopt tight ethical values

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KUALA LUMPUR, Wed? **Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad** said society should not receive passive y its cultural heritage without care-fully studying the various implications of that heri- tage.

The Prime Minister said it was possible that the values society inherited, were the very reasons it failed be- cause the cultural heritage, which included ethical and moral value systems or code, would determine how **society** functioned and whether it failed or succeed- ed.

Dr Mahathir said: "If we do not study them properly and make corrections where necessary, we may be con- demned to fail forever. & is important that we do not just focus on ethical values, but more importantly we **scrutinise** the practice of these values.

"And scrutiny must be followed by corrective mea- sures."

He said this when deliver- ing a talk on "**Towards a Fully Moral and Ethical So- ciety**" at a dinner **organised by the Harvard Club** at the Shangri-la Hotel here.

He said that in business, generally, trust in manage- ment was one of the good ethics. He added that every- one from shareholders to the most junior executive and supervisors must trust

others to carry out <sup>varying</sup> grades of responsibilities.

He said that all these **re- sponsibilities contributed** to the total performance. "Un- less everyone can be **trust- ed**, management will fail. Svstems have been devised to Circumvent this need to trust. But there is just no such system. And so trust remains an essence of good management," he said.

He said that if these val- ues were **practised**, even the least promising enterprise would succeed, or at the very least, would not suffer serious failures.

Ethical values needed to be thoroughly studied and deliberately propagated if a society wished to prosper, he said tonight.

This was because ethical values were very complex and could not be left to "**natural processes**" for their **propagation in society**.

In this context, he said, for Malaysia to achieve its vision as a fully develop- ed country by 2020, selected ethical values had to be propagated.

He said it must be selec- tively propagated within the whole society **and** among certain critical groups which were expected to play a major role in the development of the nation.

The Prime Minister iden- tified the managers, the ex- ecutives, and the profes-

sionals as one such group.

Dr Mahathir said there was a **tendency** to focus on one simple quality or ethical value to ensure the desired results.

Unfortunately, one single quality could not ensure good results, no matter how universally the quality is **re- garded** by the society as a **whole**.

He said hard work was usually regarded as a virtue but if it was dedicated to doing the wrong thing, to criminality, for example, good results could hardly be expected.

"What is needed is a set of values made up, usually, of all the universally accepted virtues"

They include, among oth- ers, diligence, honesty, rea- sonable patience, discipline, determination, dedication, grit, concentration, **atten- tion** to details, ability to **work** with others and a de- gree of humility.

He said all decision mak- ers **should** appreciate the role of ethics and morality and **practise** them daily.

**While** it was impossible for anyone to have all these virtues, it was possible for an individual or a whole na- tion to succeed reasonably well without having to **prac- tise** all the ethical virtues.

While success could not be guaranteed by **practising** good ethics, the **chances** of failure could be reduced.