

# Wilful delays will cost us dearly, says PM

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and  
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KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. — Civil servants or private sector employees who deliberately delay their work will obstruct the success of their undertaking, cause an increase in costs and lead everyone to bear an unnecessary burden, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said.

The Prime Minister said that if such an attitude prevailed, the country's administration and that of industries could not be carried out smoothly and successfully.

"The country cannot develop and compete successfully. It will become weak and be humiliated," Dr Mahathir said at the opening of a seminar on "Inculcating positive values in the administration of private and public sectors" at the Institute of Islamic Understanding Malaysia (IKIM) here.

The Prime Minister, who was stressing the importance of time, said many Muslims did not show enough respect or regard for time, even though time is one of God's gift to mankind.

He said that there were many Muslims who did not pay sufficient attention to time, either to themselves or to others. He said many Muslims even failed to stick to appointments fixed at certain times.

He said: "Not keeping to one's promise is against the principles of Islam.... What is the importance of time? If time is not fixed and held in respect, no work will be done well."

During a war, for instance, the failure of individuals or army to give emphasis to time in launching an attack could result in the loss of lives and they could suffer inevitable defeat despite being armed with sufficient weapons.

He said without necessary experience and positive values all successes achieved would be shortlived.

"Malaysia does not aspire to set up a civilisation which can shake the world. We only wish that the people live in peace and harmony with reasonable wealth and no less inferior than the more developed races.

"We want our country, race and religion to be respected. We do not want to experience the hardship suffered by several nations and races in the world," he added.

Dr Mahathir said to achieve this aspiration, though moderate, there was a need to understand the roles of positive values, culture and civilisation.

"The good values must be identified and practised and the bad ones avoided," he said.

He said while normally the values of life of certain communities existed on their own, communities which wanted to progress could choose or instil certain values which could benefit them.

Malaysia, for instance, deliberately chose to "Look

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East" to follow the work ethics of people in the East.

At the same time, the "morality" which is expanding in the West was rejected, Dr Mahathir said.

He said the reason why Malaysia was looking east became clearer when viewed alongside the recent earthquake in Japan when thousands were killed in Osaka and Kobe while a quarter of a million others lost their homes.

He said food and drinks were scarce but the unfortunate people were calm in the wake of the calamity.

There was no looting although shops were brought to the ground and shopkeepers whose shops still stood sold their goods at reasonable prices as they realised that the victims had lost their money.

"Nobody scrambled for food distributed by welfare organisations and no party tries to blame anybody because of the tragedy.

"All of them appear a bit sad but do not vent their anger at anybody.

"The Press too do not level accusations at any party," the Prime Minister said.

That Japan, which was badly defeated in the Pacific War, could develop and claim its position as among the most developed nations, was partly due to the values its people adopted.

This is the same attitude seen when the two cities were facing the aftermath of the earthquake. It was these same values, qualities and attitude that Malaysia needs to adopt and practise.

Dr Mahathir later launched three books published by IKIM -- *Ke Arah Peningkatan Kualiti Ummah, Islam dan Kemajuan Masyarakat* and *Pembangunan Ummah Ke Arah Wawasan 2020*.

He earlier presented appointment certificates to two of the three IKIM distinguished fellows, Tan Sri Syed Agil Syed Hassan Barakbah and Uztaz Uthman El-Muhammady. Another distinguished fellow, Just World Trust director Dr Chandra Muzaffar, was not present. Syed Agil, a former Supreme Court judge is a law professor at the International Islamic University while Uthman is an Islamic scholar.

The two-day seminar will discuss results of a research undertaken by IKIM in inculcating Islamic values in public administration.

Also present were IKIM chairman Tan Sri Ahmad Sarji Abdul Hamid and director-general Datuk Ismail Ibrahim.

Later, the Prime Minister held a dialogue with participants of the seminar. Dr Mahathir said the Government was working towards standardising the administration of Islamic laws to eliminate certain disparities in some States.

ment would standardise the contents of Islamic education to help ensure, at the very least, a standard interpretation of laws related to marriage, divorce and polygamy.

Dr Mahathir said introducing a standard set of laws and regulations for Muslims in the whole country was difficult because religious matters were the prerogative of the different Malay Rulers in each State.

"It is not as easy as standardising civil service regulations," he said.

He added that although Islam allowed differences in opinions and interpretations as long as they did not deviate from the true teachings of the religion, it would be ideal for a country like Malaysia to have a standard mode of administering Islamic laws.

He also expressed the hope that Islamic administration could be streamlined not just among all States but also between Muslim countries in the region.

On the question of implementing syariah laws for non-Muslims, Dr Mahathir cautioned Muslims against being too anxious to force Muslim law on their non-Muslim fellow citizens.

"In a multiracial society like ours, we should be careful because we do not wish to see chaos in this country due to any hasty action."

The dialogue also brought a few laughs when the Prime Minister was asked why religious officers relaxed conditions for polygamy when it comes to elected representatives (*wakil rakyat*).

He said: "I do at times receive information of elected representatives marrying more than one. But the news comes when they are already married. If I do away with them, we will have to hold many by-elections and I may lose a number of Deputy Ministers and Parliamentary Secretaries.

"Power is the greatest aphrodisiac," said Dr Mahathir, quoting former US politician, Henry Kissinger. "Who will want them when they are no longer elected representatives?" he asked provoking laughter from the floor.

As to why scenes of sex and violence were still shown on television, Dr Mahathir said he had raised the matter several times during Cabinet meetings.

He said if these scenes could not be totally eliminated now they should be reduced gradually.

However, he said, the best way to create morally-upright citizens was by strengthening their hearts and minds with noble values to act as barriers against negative influences.

"We may be able to control what is aired in our own country now but there will be no stopping external influences with sophisticated