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Deal with corruption now

Bulbir Singh

THANK you for exploring the taboo issue of corruption. You made a brave decision to take on this issue by the horns and this proves that you care for what is happening to society.

I would appeal to you to continue to be stout-hearted and uncowed, and utilise your resources to further explore corruption, wherever you find it, and any abuse of power on your front page.

You would be doing society a great service if you managed to make citizens "shy" to "take or give, however small and in whatever form".

Many know that there are a lot of people on the take, but they remain silent. Their stand is, "Why should I say anything? I could get into trouble if I opened my mouth. And people could come around asking for details."

Others say, "Let the authorities deal with it, it's really not that bad here yet!"

The views expressed by Chandra Muzaffar and Prof Syed Hussein (Life & Times, May 2) have much substance. Their proposals - namely the establishment of a board of ethical business practices, mandatory declaration of assets for public figures, confiscation of ill-gotten gains - if implemented, would go a long way towards eradicating the corruption that now "hides" behind many governmental and business transactions.

Recently Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad made an impassioned plea to Umno members to refrain from any form of corruption. But did it help? Is corruption minimised among Umno members now? There is certainly much talk. Shouldn't we be taking action?

Rooting out corruption is a long process. Greed and corruption are like cancer in any society, because they erode our values and system - the "soul" of the nation.

They create contempt for our institutions and we all end up having to cough up, otherwise "nothing gets done".

But the damage goes far beyond the monetary; it saps the spirit. In a dishonest society, we are constantly looking over our shoulders. Trust is violated; everyone is suspect.

When we don't trust our government, politicians, bosses, employers, the very fabric of society unravels.

We see today many nations lost in dishonesty; even their Prime Ministers are before the courts.

But visualise a society where there are many honest people. Would it not benefit everyone?

Honesty across the board would create trust and confidence. But such honesty must begin at home in the hearts and minds of every citizen. No Government can legislate this goodness, this honour. Without citizens' support, moral legislations do not work. The charter of honesty in whatever we do must be written in our hearts.

There can be no sounder basis for honesty than the great religions of the world. And leaders must make it clear that they would not tolerate dishonesty, that the corrupt would be dealt with seriously.

Courts should pronounce stiff sentences for such people who lack character, discipline and are a disgrace to society.

And we mustn't waste time. Let us handle the issue now - we would be glad that we dealt with it in time. We can't afford to sweep it under the carpet, for "worms" propagate profusely, and soon will be all over us.

Former US President George Bush is quoted as having said "Government should be an opportunity for public service, not private gain."

Let us begin to obey the unwritten code of honesty. This would bring much prosperity - and abundance - to the people and the nation.

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