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Getting to grips with challenges facing Vision 2020

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I compliment the Institute of Strategic and International Studies, the Economic Planning Unit, the Implementation and Co-ordination Unit of the Prime Minister's Department and the Asian Strategy and Leadership Institute for organising the recent National Congress on Vision 2020.

Other than the keynote address by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, speakers elaborated on each of the nine challenges of Vision 2020 and its progress so far.

At the concurrent workshop sessions, the participants examined the challenges in more detail and the conclusions were presented to the congress in the presence of the Prime Minister and his Deputy, Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

It has been six years since Vision 2020 was promulgated.

In his keynote address, Dr Mahathir said Vision 2020 was on the right track but there was a pressing need for a correct balance between material, spiritual and moral development.

He said urbanisation had brought about drastic challenges and pointed out that these challenges were not all bad, but there was a weakening of family ties and restraints leading to the emergence of various social problems such as dadah addiction, promiscuity, broken homes and abandoned babies.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysians must keep proper values and ethical systems, otherwise they would lose their sense of direction and not achieve Vision 2020.

He called on Malaysians to help tackle the nation's social agenda and pointed out two aspects that required urgent focus - to ensure a moral and ethical society, and a caring society and culture based on ensuring strong family ties.

The congress was a remarkable event as the participants offered very frank and constructive views on each challenge.

On the first challenge - to establish a united Malaysian nation - many participants felt that to achieve this steps had to be taken to reduce ethnic polarisation.

On establishing a moral and ethical society, participants called for greater public accountability and transparency in all spheres of public and private sector activities.

The congress also recommended the Government mobilise the people to fight corruption through a "zero corruption" campaign.

It also reaffirmed the need to establish a matured, liberal and tolerant society so that Malaysians of all races can continue to freely exist, live and practise their religious beliefs, customs and traditions.

It was recommended that the term "tolerant" should be replaced with "mutual understanding" or "mutual respect".

The organisers should compile all the recommendations and forward them to the Government for its consideration. It is hoped that the positive ideas proposed can be accepted for implementation.

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