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Now is the time to instil anti-graft culture in young

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"DON'T let graft become a part of our culture." This was Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamed's clear message delivered at Umno's 51st anniversary celebration.

Dr Mahathir's statement, made at an important Umno gathering was, in many ways, very significant.

It reflected his concern over the problem of corruption which, though he acknowledged had not reached a critical stage, required quick and decisive action before the situation worsened.

Dr Mahathir said "corruption should not be allowed to reach a level where it was no longer regarded as an "under the table activity but be accepted as a practice and be part and parcel of the local culture."

He was also quoted by the Press as saying after chairing an Umno supreme council meeting that the party would not tolerate or protect those involved in corruption regardless of their positions in the party or Government.

In addition, Dr Mahathir also told the Dewan Negara that action would be taken against government leaders who led a lifestyle beyond what they could reasonably afford based on the income and assets they declared when they were appointed.

It is an indisputable fact that corruption is a global problem which must be curbed through firm and decisive action so that it will not become part of a nation's culture.

It would not serve any purpose for a country to become fully industrialised and its people prosperous but lacking in spiritual and moral strengths.

In our drive towards a moral and ethical society, the following fundamental issues need to be addressed.

First, there must be a political will to put an end to all forms of corruption.

In connection with this, one is encouraged to note the reaffirmation by both the Prime Minister and his Deputy of their commitment to eradicate money politics and corruption.

Second, there is a need to develop an ethical corporate climate.

Third, the people must be prepared to adopt a culture based on honesty, discipline and credibility.

Here lies the biggest challenge to all Malaysians - how to be honest, sincere and corruption-free.

It is by no means an easy task given the many temptations and greed of those who are never satisfied.

Attitudes have to change and unethical practices have to give way to honesty and discipline.

One way of achieving this is to educate the younger generation on the consequences of corruption.

More anti-graft campaigns can be organised in schools. Teaching schoolchildren to dislike corruption in the same manner as they are told to hate dadah is important.

Through such campaigns, I am confident we can create an anti-bribery culture among the young.

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