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PM: Preserving family institution vital

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KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. - Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today it was vital that family institution be preserved and enhanced although its deterioration could already be detected in the West.

He said the Government could not accept negative trends like cohabitation between unmarried couples and lesbianism as advocated by some quarters in the West.

The Prime Minister hoped such trends would not spread to Malaysia.

He was speaking at a dialogue held in conjunction with Universiti Malaya's alumni reunion and exhibition of its works at the university's main campus in Lembah Pantai.

He had earlier delivered his inaugural address titled "Malaysia in the next millennium: Challenges for the new generation".

Dr Mahathir said if Muslims could maintain a moderate approach without resorting to extremism, the religion would not be rejected.

"It is important to strike a balance and not adopt an extreme approach," he said, adding that in the West, though many still had faith in religion, others denounced it after "losing" their ways.

He said confusion about religion had also resulted in many rejecting them.

On whether governments would still exist in the future, Dr Mahathir said some people thought they would not be needed.

He said these people argued currency manipulation was not wrong as the market was free.

"But a free market does not mean that it can be used to the extent of impoverishing others. When freedom is abused, there is a need for restriction, therefore governments are needed."

On corruption, Dr Mahathir said: "While I am against it, I believe the matter has to be handled in a fair manner."

"Some people allege someone is corrupt just because he is the son of somebody or he is holding some positions. To them, power corrupts, so those in power have to be corrupt."

Dr Mahathir said it was wrong to assume or accuse others as being corrupt without providing any proof. Dr Mahathir also said many forget that the charges for privatised services were low because of Government subsidy.

He said if university students were required to pay the full amount for their studies, the cost could run into tens of thousands per year.

Dr Mahathir reiterated that the Government would not neglect its responsibility to provide education for the people.

He also said road users would have to pay three times more than what they were paying now if not for Government subsidy. He regretted that many had failed to appreciate this.

"Malaysians want quality roads but some complain when they have to pay for the use of the facility."

Dr Mahathir also said there were two type of youths in the country - one which was more worldly, materialistic and wanted to enjoy life and the other which was more patriotic and would like to contribute to society and nation-building.

The Prime Minister hoped the older generation would play its role to inculcate and help shape youths with values.

On a claim that the authorities had erred in their planning resulting in

the perennial congestion problem in the city, Dr Mahathir said such a view was only a matter of perception.

"We have to be patient. We have to consider that Kuala Lumpur is building six LRT systems at one go, something that has never been done before."

Dr Mahathir said while foreign leaders visiting Malaysia had nothing but praises for its achievements, some Malaysians were "very good at criticising" or down-grading themselves.

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