

26/06/1997

Small fry won't participate in graft once big fish are netted

Dr S. Vijayaratnam

IT is indeed commendable that the Government is intent on taking serious measures to weed out corruption in high places.

This is one of the few remaining stumbling blocks that needs to be eradicated in the creation of a developed society.

Malaysia is well on its way to become a fully industrialised country and a leader among developing nations by the year 2020, as envisaged by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

In the achievement of the much-esteemed goal, credibility and transparency of administration is of utmost importance.

The eyes of the international community are on us now and the continued presence of corruption will certainly be a negative factor.

We cannot be seen to be striving for greatness when this problem remains rampant.

The confidence of foreign investors, bankers and industrialists will not be gained in such an unhealthy atmosphere.

The nations with whom we trade will still be wary and not give the 100 per cent OK signal in dealing with Malaysia in the presence of corruption.

Who in their right mind will open themselves up completely and without reservations when they know for a fact that some expenses have to be reserved for kickbacks?

On the local scene, the trust and confidence of the common people will be incomplete if they know that, to get anything done at all, some form of "greasing" is required.

All that the Government has worked for will be meaningless in the presence of corruption and this will surely retard the nation-building process.

In the interest of this exercise, it is imperative to examine the anatomy of graft.

As it takes two hands to clap, so also does corruption require the participation of two parties - the giver and the receiver.

Until now, it would seem that more attention has been devoted to the latter, while the giver has been neglected.

It would be wise, therefore, to clamp down on those who encourage this scourge by offering bribes for favours.

It may also be prudent, in this context, to examine the possible existence of the politics of patronage.

Immense favours may have been granted to people close to well-placed politicians in return for financial and material contributions, or even helping a politician gain power by questionable means.

It is good that Acting Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim has made it clear that the top people, especially, will not be spared.

Once the "big fish" are caught and punished, the "small fish" will automatically be quiet and not indulge in this shameful practice.

It is high time that we cleaned up our house once and for all.