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Youths must maintain focus on ideals, aspirations

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IN his message to the nation's youths at the launching of the national-level Youth Day 2000 celebrations in Kuantan last week, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad called on youths not to lose sight of their ideals and work hard to achieve them and take the country to greater heights.

Although there is no guarantee they will succeed, according to the Prime Minister the youths will stagnate mentally if they are devoid of ideals and abandon their dreams and aspirations.

Dr Mahathir's advice is very timely considering that the future of the nation depends on these youths and their contributions to nation-building.

Our youths must be constantly reminded of their responsibility towards themselves and the nation. They must rekindle and strengthen their patriotic spirit as this underscores the importance of their role in national development.

The youths should use their educational knowledge, skills, ingenuity and adaptability to contribute to national development.

Our youths should reject negative influences and activities such as drug abuse and crime and help organise and participate in programmes to create healthy and progressive communities.

As Malaysia continues to strive towards developed nation status, our youths must make social and moral development an important national agenda. This will inculcate positive values needed to make Vision 2020 a success.

It is an undeniable fact that our country's technological advance and economic success have led to various social problems affecting the youths.

With the advent of satellite television and the Internet coupled with the process of globalisation, our youths are exposed to various unhealthy and negative values which could lead to moral decay.

They should constantly be on guard against falling prey to moral decay and degradation. Continuous efforts must be made to check the degradation of moral and ethical values in our society.

We need a continuous programme of moral reinforcement to make our youths aware of their responsibilities towards themselves and the nation.

There is also a need to balance economic growth with social, moral and human development since the yardstick to growth is a balance between economic growth and moral well-being.

The decision by the Government to establish a Cabinet committee on youth affairs is a step in the right direction. The move is a reflection of the Government's concern on the issue of youth development which must be tackled with a sense of urgency.

It is hoped the Cabinet committee, under the chairmanship of the Prime Minister, will initiate plans to check the undesirable activities affecting the youths as well as to adopt and implement measures to develop the country's policies on youth.

I share the view of the Youth and Sports Minister Datuk Hishammuddin Hussein that outdated programmes for youths should be replaced with those that truly meet their aspirations.

In this connection, it is necessary to have a second look, for example, at the 10-year old Rakan Muda programme and inject new ideas to make it more effective.

Hishammuddin's open-minded approach in listening to the youths and

getting their feedback and constructive criticisms will certainly go a long way in establishing closer rapport between the youths and the Ministry concerned. It could lead to finding durable solutions to help tackle the many challenges that lie ahead for the nations' youths.

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