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## Achieving NEP objectives

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GENTING HIGHLANDS, Thurs. - The Government is finding it difficult to achieve the objectives of the New Economic Policy due to cultural differences between the Malays and Chinese, especially with regard to education, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

The Prime Minister said to ensure that the progress of the various races was balanced, values and cultural practices which hindered development should be eradicated.

Revealing that the Government had difficulty meeting the 55 per cent quota for Malay students in universities, he said this was indicative of the difference in culture between the Malays and Chinese on education.

He said while the Chinese placed high priority on the acquisition of knowledge, Malay culture did not value knowledge as much.

He said while the revelation may give some a heartache, the Malays, although given the opportunities, did not go about seeking knowledge as earnestly as the Chinese.

"This is why the progress of Malay and Chinese children differ vastly. It is not that the Malays have less superior brains. The brain power of the Chinese, Malay or white people is the same.

"However, the Chinese stress a lot on education and parents are willing to sacrifice a huge portion of their income to pay for their children's studies," he said.

While acknowledging that there were Malay parents who did the same, the Prime Minister said, however, the number was small.

Dr Mahathir said this at the opening the first National Education Convention at Institut Aminuddin Baki themed "Excellent Leadership in Education is the Foundation for a Successful Vision". The four-day convention is being attended by teachers and Education Ministry staff.

Also present was Education Minister Tan Sri Musa Mohamad.

Dr Mahathir said the Chinese practised values taught by Confucius in their daily lives.

"Islam gives its followers more guidance in terms of life values as a Muslim but the majority do not practise it.

"Muslims are asked to seek knowledge as far as China, but we Malays are not willing to face the challenges as how it was during the time of the Prophet.

"Malay students do not study hard even after receiving all kinds of aid and facilities. This is why we find it difficult to enrol 55 per cent of Malay students in university as they do not have the requisite qualifications.

"Many times, Chinese students who are more qualified have to be rejected."

The progress of Malay students in university, he said, was not very good as they did not devote all their time and energy to the acquisition of knowledge.

Dr Mahathir added the difference in the pace of progress among communities in the world was due to their values or cultural practices.

"An abundance of natural resources, conducive climate, geographical factors and others have no effect on culture ... that is why in the same country, different races with different cultures achieve varying degrees of success."

Dr Mahathir said Malay children needed to be inculcated with Islamic

values.

"Nothing that is taught by Islam will bring us ill if we do not purposely misinterpret its teachings.

"For instance, once a promise is made, a Muslim must abide by it. However, many Muslims do not do so and do not feel any guilt.

"Because of non-adherence to Islamic teachings, the achievement of the Malays is not where it is supposed to be."

Dr Mahathir said if changes were required to be made on certain cultural practices, the person playing the main role would be an educator.

"In Malaysia, if we want the Malays to be on the same level as the other developed races in the world, then there must be a change in the life values and cultural practices among Malay children.

"They have to be inculcated with true Islamic values, not those propagated by parties with other interests."

The Prime Minister said it was important that educators were trained in instilling such values and culture among their students.

"Lecturers at teachers' training colleges must impart the desired values to their charges so that they can in turn teach their students later."

Dr Mahathir said when Vision 2020 was first announced, "we were still in the industrial era but today we are faced with a new paradigm, that is, a developed country needs to acquire technology and also information.

"The Vision 2020 concept that we indicated in 1991 is not the same as Vision 2020 we are outlining today. It may change again before the year 2020."

He said Vision 2020 largely depended on the quality of the people.

"Muslims have missed out on the Industrial Revolution. Let not the Malays in Malaysia deliberately miss out on the opportunities accorded by the Information Revolution. Should we miss out again, we may not be able to catch up."

Later at a Press conference, Dr Mahathir was asked whether national schools would emulate some of the positive traits of national-type Chinese schools.

He said the difference between Chinese and national schools was also due to culture.

"It is culture which influences the school to be more attractive to Chinese and also Malay students."

On parents sending their children to religious schools, Dr Mahathir said it was good if the students were really learning about religion.

"However, there are those who take the opportunity to influence the students with their political beliefs. This has happened even in kindergarten.

"They tell the children that the Government is not Islamic and that it should be toppled. They also teach the children to step on and spit on pictures of certain leaders."

At the same Press conference, Musa said the ministry received periodic reports on developments in schools.

"Any case of misconduct will be investigated and action taken if the report was found to have basis."