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Don't spare the rod with this kind of students

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THE recent announcement by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad to introduce radical measures, including possible reduction in the number of Bumiputera students in universities over a certain period, to check their moral decay and lacklustre performance, is most timely.

The situation must be real bad for the Prime Minister to make such a move. It must certainly be the straw that broke the camel's back. Say what you like - drastic or otherwise - it has got to be done to arrest the rot that was setting in among some students engaging themselves in unproductive activities that are not related to their studies. It came as no surprise that they do not excel in their studies.

Sad to say, the Malays in general will never learn. We are made too comfortable in life, thus we assume and take all things for granted. Instead of studying, some of the students became arrogant, some even hold the Government - their sponsors - to ransom by making unreasonable demands and at times openly declaring support for the Opposition. The students certainly got their priorities wrong.

Students' mission is to study hard and acquire as much knowledge as possible. They should not betray the trust placed on them by their parents and the nation.

Malay students should be intelligent and mature enough to acknowledge the special privileges accorded to them by the Government - lower entry point and financial assistance to pursue their studies. They must at all times realise these privileges are not their absolute right. If abused, they could be withdrawn.

Immediate steps should be taken to dismiss students involved in these "unhealthy" activities. They certainly have no business to be in universities.

Malay students now will find it very competitive to join the universities as the yardstick would be "good is not good when better is expected" (Thomas Fuller).

To the Prime Minister, permit me to say, you appeared in no compromising mood when interviewed on television a few nights ago regarding this matter - meritocracy. No one in their right frame of mind would blame you for feeling so disgusted and dejected over the whole matter. You must have felt you have been cheated and betrayed by the students.

Datuk Seri, you got a job to do. Sometimes you have got to be cruel to be kind. Do not spare the rod. Give them a dose of your medicine.

In your 20 years as Prime Minister you have brought Malaysia to great heights with your numerous feats in terms of development, economy and security. Leaders all over the world acknowledge your outstanding leadership.

You gave your best in whatever you do. You placed the interest of the nation and people irrespective of their race or creed closest to your heart. You cared for their wellbeing. It's impossible to please everybody. If there are any shortcomings, it is only natural. After all, you are human.

Backlash? Ignore them. Your political foes - the "much a-do about nothing" group - have done nothing other than criticise and embark on a hate campaign against you. They are envious of your successes. Only their ego prevented them from submitting to facts and reality. They can bluff people sometime but not all the time.

I believe you, too, advocate this philosophy, "If the end brings me out all right, what is said against me won't amount to anything. If the end brings me out wrong, 10 angels swearing I was right would make no difference" (Abraham Lincoln).

I have in no way deviated from the original subject on meritocracy when I started to praise the Prime Minister at the later part. It's relevant. Most importantly, what have we all, especially the Malays, learned from this episode? "Never kill the goose that lays the golden eggs."