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Skills for decent living

THE move to equip rural folk who migrate to urban areas with skills to enable them to eke out a decent living is laudable. Their dismal earnings in urban areas often result in them ending up as squatters. The Government's knowledge-based help presents opportunities for them to use the resources available to them to enhance their own potential and self-reliance. This lends credence to the proverb that "give a man a fish and he'll eat for a day; teach a man to fish and he'll eat for a lifetime".

This sensible and constructive approach in looking into the needs of the people equips them with knowledge for survival and eventually, empowerment, which will stand themselves and future generations in good stead. Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said on Saturday the Government will set up training centres in the country for them to acquire the relevant skills. In turn, they can contribute more effectively to nation-building in which each and every Malaysian has a role. He said this in the wake of recent clashes between squatters at Kampung Medan and Jalan Klang Lama which have been linked to poverty.

An expected dramatic increase in rural-urban migration in future will widen differentials in wages and unemployment, among others, if the rural-urban imbalance is not addressed and insufficient measures are taken to alleviate poverty. The disparities in quality of life between the haves and have-nots will inevitably lend a sense of deprivation to the marginalised. More so when studies have shown an overwhelming number of people, especially the poor, find the urban environment physically, psychologically and socially taxing. Unable to cope with the stress, some of them turn to unsavoury activities in defiance of a perceived sense of injustice in life or merely to earn more to make ends meet.

Disrupting harmony in the face of an inability to allow good sense to prevail can only hinder progress. While there may be some hardliners bent on destabilising the peace and harmony we have enjoyed for decades, the majority realise that positive changes in attitude can go a long way in enhancing a sense of self-worth and contributing towards a better quality of life. No system or administration is perfect and, by the same token, no reasonable Government likes to see a yawning gap between the haves and have-nots.

The various development plans over the years point to sincere efforts in giving a more meaningful quality of life to the people. Development has always been accorded priority and funds allocated accordingly to meet the objectives of improving the people's living standards. Sometimes though, there is a dislocation in disbursement of funds for one reason or another, which means these allocations will be slow to filter down to the people.

Besides providing basic infrastructure, the Government is making concerted efforts to enhance human development which includes the teaching of skills to rural folk in the proposed training centres. Those in need should take the opportunity to arm themselves with basic marketable skills to earn a decent living in an increasingly competitive environment.

At the same time, those tasked with the responsibility of implementing the Government's policy of teaching skills to rural people have to see that it is effectively carried out. It is positive results the people are looking for.

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