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Teachers must teach

ARE teachers still respected in our society? Generally they are but considering the many black sheep among them, also because top students prefer other and better paying jobs, the changing values of society have taken a toll on the image of what used to be a noble profession. Be that as it may, besides parents, teachers do exert a crucial influence on the children. While they impart knowledge and try to encourage learning they also help to mould the minds of Malaysia's future generation.

It is therefore fitting that the nation should honour the teaching profession in the yearly National Teachers' Day celebration, when the people are reminded of the important role of teachers in national development.

However, of late, there are aspects of the teaching profession which need to be highlighted and addressed. Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has reminded teachers that, as government staff, it is vital they maintain their professionalism. In making this timely reminder, he also urged the teachers to weed out undesirable elements creeping into schools and educational institutions. The Prime Minister pointed out that these elements were poisoning the minds of students to go against the Government.

Teachers have to undergo professional training in order to teach and, being professionals, teachers should not allow their emotions to cloud their judgment and teaching duties. They must be objective and no matter how much they agree or disagree with official policies and actions, their main task is to teach the students on the subjects they are assigned for and they should not deviate from this role.

They should set aside their personal political beliefs when they teach and should not bring their sentiments into the classroom and confuse the young minds. Teachers must be exemplary role models for students. They cannot possibly expect their students to look up to them if they allow their sentiments to influence them in the classroom.

The role of the teacher is to also adequately prepare the younger generation to successfully face the challenges of the future which include being equipped with knowledge of IT. In undertaking their daily chores of teaching, teachers should always remember that they play a critical role in nation building and they must therefore keep in touch with developments in IT and the K-economy.

What the teachers do and how they behave in class and in the school compound are being observed by their students. They may not be always aware of being constantly watched by students but they should make it a point to be mindful of what they say and do.

Teaching is not like any other profession because if a teacher does not sincerely care for the wellbeing and future of the students, he is unlikely to make a good teacher, no matter how academically brilliant he is. Even if a teacher is a disciplinarian and very strict with his students who may resent him at first, his sincerity in caring for the welfare of his students will eventually show up.

There are countless examples of naughty students who could have taken the wrong road in life if not for their teachers. Many of these students, when they have become adults and have families of their own, visit their teachers and thank them for their care and guidance. Such an expression of gratitude cannot be bought with money and reflects the noble nature of the

teaching profession.

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