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Mahathir-Corruption

DR M: SELF-DISCIPLINE EFFECTIVE WEAPON AGAINST CORRUPTION

KUALA LUMPUR, June 28 (Bernama) -- Malaysians should be instilled with high self-discipline and good values to reject and fight corruption right from the early age, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said tonight.

Noting that corruption cannot be fought through laws and punishment alone, he said, the most effective weapon was discipline and adherence to good values which could deter one from wrongdoings.

"Equip the people with this culture (self-discipline and good values) and three-quarters of the battle will be won," he said when speaking at the Transparency International Malaysia National Integrity Medal Awards presentation.

Dr Mahathir presented the awards posthumously to Tun Dr Ismail Abdul Rahman (former deputy prime minister), Tun Tan Siew Sin (former Finance Minister) and Tun Ismail Mohamad Ali (former Bank Negara Governor).

The awards were received by a representative of their families.

Stressing the importance of good values to be believed and practised by individuals and by the community, he said, personal virtues and qualities as well as good values were even more relevant today than ever before as people struggle to strike a balance between material progress and spiritual development.

"Our concern today is that in allowing ourselves to be distracted and consumed by material rewards, or, calling a spade a spade, greed, we tend to abandon our personal values, values that can make a world of difference to the way we order our lives.

"I've absolutely no doubt at all that our future as a viable, modern and balanced nation will depend not only on how quickly we learn to master cutting edge technological innovations, but also, and perhaps even more important, how prepared we are as individuals and as a community to recognise the importance of what Transparency International calls a nation integrity system," he said.

Although by reinforcing institutions, ethical standards, legal regulations and other measures that standards could be raised and corruption be reduced, he said, one must not forget that it took two - the giver and receiver - for corruption to be consummated.

Corruption, as an impediment and obstacle to sustainable development, he said, was an unnecessary and an unproductive cost, has a way of escalating and continuously reducing the competitiveness of a country.

He said Malaysia, whose trade is twice the size of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP), just could not afford the additional cost and unless Malaysians fight corruption now, the country run the risk of it becoming endemic.

Describing that it was the public, which determined whether corruption became a culture or not, he said, many believed that the "big fish" must be got at, but the minnows were not important.

"But the culture of corruption begins with the minnows. They don't stay minnows forever. Some will get to high places since their early small-time indiscretions receive no attention.

"Besides, when corruption is tolerated among the minnows, the big fish gets encouraged and society as a whole would accept the practice. It becomes a culture and the culture of people is the most difficult to

change," he said.

More laws, including death penalty, could have been formulated, but crime would continue to be committed, he said.

Those who avoid crimes, were not really deterred by the laws and the punishment but because they believed it was wrong to do so.

"In other words, it is self-discipline and adherence to good values which prevent them from doing what is wrong and only incidentally because of laws and punishments," he said.

Dr Mahathir said illegal gratification was attractive because of the obvious immediate personal gains.

It was difficult to convince the corrupt that he would lose even if he was not caught, as in the long run he would have to pay up.

"A country, where corruption is a way of life, would never be able to develop, no matter how rich it may be. A country which remains poor cannot possibly give a good life to the corrupt," he said.

Speaking at length that historically the Malay states were not able to progress because of corruption, Dr Mahathir said it took a long time before the sovereignty of the Malay states was restored.

Clearly, he said, a country can be completely lost through bribery and corruption.

Thus, Dr Mahathir said Malaysians, the Malays in particular, should very well know the dangers of corruption as well as bribery and should avoid it like poison.

"They should learn from their history and they should be constantly be reminded of how they lost their independence and very nearly lost their country completely when (Sir Harold) McMichael treaties were signed.

"Next time, the exit may not be so easy," he warned.

-- BERNAMA

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