

Good values go with developed status

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THE criteria to be a developed state or country have been well-spelled out by Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad about 15 years ago in Vision 2020, says Dr Goh Ban Lee who was, until recently, associate professor of Planning and Development Management at Universiti Sains Malaysia. He had been lecturing at the university since 2001.

He has published books on urban planning, urban governance and buying homes in Malaysia.

Goh, who maintains a weekly column in a local English daily, believes that there is far too much emphasis in Malaysia on acquiring titles such as a developed state or country, city status or even "Datuk" and "Tan Sri".

He feels that Selangor has, at the very least, not met the fourth objective of Vision 2020, which is to become a fully moral and

ethical society whose citizens are strong in religious and spiritual values and imbued with the highest of ethical standards.

"Why do we still need to build road bumps to make drivers slow down when a speed limit sign should suffice?" he asks.

"The fact that there are too many cases of non-compliance with municipal rules and regulations is testimony that Malaysians and the people of Selangor do not have high ethical values."

In terms of town planning, there is no specific definition of what is considered a developed country but there are internationally accepted standards, says Goh, who believes that in a truly developed city or state, simple rules are followed.

For example, he says, "Pedestrians are well provided for and the cars stop at zebra

crossings even before the pedestrians step off the curbs."

Cities in developed countries do not have illegal conversion of land use or illegal renovations and the few who do break these laws are swiftly prosecuted, he adds.

Goh says it is useful to recall Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi's speech at the Harvard Club earlier this year when he spoke of the characteristics of a developed country.

The Prime Minister, he says, talked about software development (human skills set) as being the bones and tissue that the country needs in order to be a truly developed country.

A city, state or country without a sound value system cannot be called developed, he says.