

17/06/2003

'Bad elements will rob society of vision'

Koh Lay Chin

KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. - The goals of Vision 2020 may not be achieved if unhealthy elements such as pornographic videos and child abuse continue to plague society, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

He said unhealthy elements stemmed from problems in the cultivation of virtues when children were educated and trained at home and schools.

"That is how this cultivation (of values), the fortress against the bad and evil, is not instilled in the hearts of society," he said in a programme called Malaysia 2020 produced by 59 Productions for RTM tonight.

The Prime Minister was interviewed by New Straits Times group editor Datuk Ahmad A. Talib.

He said there were those who did not take drugs as they knew it was wrong, and not because of the laws.

He lamented that there were children easily influenced by negative elements as they were not instilled with good values.

The first thing the younger generation had to do to achieve Vision 2020, he said, was to set out a purpose and goals.

"It obviously has to be good objectives and we need to discipline ourselves and be persistent. That is, if we can do something repeatedly until we have mastered that skill, we will achieve our goals," he said.

Speaking on various issues related to Vision 2020, he said Malaysia did not want to become wealthy at the expense of its culture, virtues and faith.

"We find those that are developed push away religion in their lives or satisfy only their desires and do not take into consideration the pressures afflicted on others," he said.

He said Japan and Korea were examples to Malaysia because they showed that it was not only Westerners who could be successful.

"Being poor does not mean having no ability. If they practise good values, God willing, they will succeed. We look to Japan, which has a very strong discipline," he said.

He said Malaysia would also look at Western countries as examples of development but added that they had forgotten how they achieved success.

"They do not know how difficult it is to develop a country. In comparison, Japan was destroyed in the war and it knew how to revive itself. That is why we focus on Japan and Korea," he said.

On threats to the country such as the 1997 economic crisis and the trend of unhealthy elements in politics, Dr Mahathir said Vision 2020 would be able to defend itself if Umno's power was maintained.

"(This is because) Umno is not extreme. We are willing to take into account the country's interests more than just Umno's interests, the Malays' interests or individual interests.

"We see the whole picture which includes all, including the importance of peace and good racial relations in our country," he said.

He also said Malaysia would lose part of its independence if its people were choosy about jobs as this meant a dependence on foreign labour.

"We need to do all kinds of work, whether heavy or light. We need to equip ourselves with skills at all levels, such as information technology and so on," he said.

On the problem of agencies with bureaucrats who were not proactive in giving out loans, Dr Mahathir said there was a need to train bureaucrats so that they understood their roles.

He said they were given orders and that was why they sometimes appeared rigid with administrative procedures.

On people who sought loans but later spent it on luxuries, he said people should train themselves to hold steadfast to their promises.

"If we are in debt, even if we have to strive, we have to pay back our dues. If we cannot afford to be in debt, then we do not (fall into debt)."

He also said a major problem was of some Bumiputeras who liked to sell their contracts when they did not work hard and failed in their businesses. This forced the Government to establish government-controlled bodies to maintain Bumiputera rights, he added.