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We need a master plan for social progress

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THE country has done remarkably well under the leadership of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad these last 20 years.

The sheer determination to bring economic development to the country can be seen from the numerous success stories that Malaysians can be proud of. The super structures, comparable to anything in the world, and state-of-the-art facilities are just some of the many examples of sound leadership and economic well-being.

However, we have lagged behind in social progress.

This deterioration of social capital is no fault of the leadership. All of us Malaysians must take responsibility for failing values and declining social standards.

The rising crime rates, the unchecked dadah menace, corruption in the public and private sectors, the inconsistent enforcement of government policies and laws, gangsterism and the political dichotomy between parties - all of these point to an urgent need for corrective measures.

With only about 17 years more to Vision 2020, we do not have the luxury of time to play with. Unless we are successful in enriching our social capital, any amount of economic development will just crumble in the face of the challenges of this century.

The world faces unprecedented challenges in the wake of an aggressive wave of globalisation. Terrorism, religious extremism, borderless crimes and political bullying are some of the things we Malaysians must gear our children to fight off.

Thus, it is important that we adults make a total effort to strengthen the country's social capital.

We need to map out a master plan that will be endorsed, supported and subscribed to by every Malaysian. It must become the most important agenda of the country from now.

Perhaps a good moment to launch this agenda would be during the coming Merdeka celebrations. Rather than gloat over our successes, we should mark the occasion with a resolute will to repair, build and innovate our country's social capital.

Malaysia Boleh! Let us get cracking, for the legacy we leave must be worthwhile.

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