

Dr M: Bring back shame and punishment

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By Lawrence Yong

While he believes that Malaysia can achieve Vision 2020, two key features of a developed nation are still sorely absent, says the vision's architect, former prime minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

First, the rule of law needs tightening to uphold the moral character of youth. Next, science subjects should be taught in English.

"The negative forces are growing somewhat larger than before... we want to be a developed country, minus the wrong characters," Mahathir told an audience of 600 youths gathered in Cheras today.

He gave the example of how bad apples put together with good apples only make all apples bad, not the other way around.

None on developed countries, Mahathir said he admired Japan as its culture has a great sense of shame and punishment. Even a painful suicide was an option, rather than to losing face on behalf of the family or national interest.

"I admire the Japanese strong sense of shame... that is what moulds the Japanese character," said Mahathir, who among other things, is famous for his 'Look East Policy' when he was Malaysia's prime minister from 1981 to 2003.

"One thing we should give young people is this strong sense of shame... Most Malaysians have this sense of shame but not all, we need to spread the sense of shame."

He elaborated later, during the question-and-answer session, on how to raise shame and tackle the "bad apple" problem.

"As a nation, we cannot be seen to be oppressive but some segments of society need to be disciplined," Mahathir said in response to a question from a teenager in the audience.

"Over time, the quality of discipline has deteriorated... we have to use the carrot and stick, then the bad apples can become good apples again. Apply punishment... we still need laws," he added, as a solution to the rising crime situation and deviant

behaviour in the country.

'Nobody cares because I am not the PM'

Apart from moral character, Mahathir said the only other thing that could undermine Malaysia's race to developed country status in seven years' time was the lack of scientific advancement.

"I am an advocate of study of science and maths - I would like this to be in English ...but nobody cares because I am not the PM. Before, I got to twist arms, now my arms are twisted." he said.

In the recently released 13-year National Education Blueprint, the government retained the policy of teaching Maths and Science subjects in Bahasa Malaysia as the way to equalise education standards across rural and urban schools.

The usually conservative 88-year old Mahathir beamed as he talked about the awesomeness of advancements in science.

"Today, science dominates all knowledge. Everyday, somebody is discovering something new, something I have never heard of before," he said.

Notably, the man dubbed as Malaysia's "father of modernity" still donned the iconic grey suit that he wore for much of his time in office (as also seen on the cover of his biography).

Mahathir also cited how impressed he was by the Internet and recently, by a Korean technology that transfers photographs between cameras in an instant, with just a touch.

He was invited to speak to youths as part of 25th anniversary celebration of the International Youth Centre, a centre that Mahathir opened in 1988 with then Youth and Sports Minister Najib Abdul Razak.

The audience consisted of representatives from government bodies, youth groups and non-governmental organisations.

