

Dr M: M'sians want govt 'to get off their cushy seats'

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PETALING JAYA: Malaysians expect the government to “roll up their sleeves, get off their cushy seats and get cracking” so that the nation will recover from the pandemic, says former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

The country needs clear direction and political stability to move forward, he said, adding that unless the government gets its act together and stops making decisions for political gains, there is no getting out of the rut.

“Whether the government likes it or not, what amplified our troubles were indecisiveness, flip-flopping, wrong priorities, unclear direction, partisan political considerations and the lack of vision and ideas.

“The various lockdowns, confusing standard operating procedures (SOPs), mounting infection and death rates, have all taken a toll on the Malaysian psyche,” he said in

his keynote closing address at the Perdana Leadership Foundation CEO Forum 2021 yesterday.

Dr Mahathir said the nation is now at a critical point where the government needs to inspire confidence, provide clear direction and political stability, and be committed to its vision of establishing a prosperous, inclusive and sustainable Malaysia.

“We are at a juncture where lip service and half-baked ideas cannot and will not be tolerated.

“We expect the government to roll up their sleeves, get off their cushy seats and get cracking,” said the Parti Pejuang Tanah Air Malaysia chairman.

Dr Mahathir also highlighted the role of digitalisation of education in the new normal to ensure quality learning for children and the nation's competitiveness.

If previously Malaysia could afford to take its time in digitalising education, the pandemic had taken away this luxury and today, the

country is scrambling to meet the educational needs of every single child, he noted.

“The world has changed dramatically and the youth no longer want to be taught in the same way that the older generation were taught.

“It cannot any longer be a one-way communication – from teacher to student. It has to be interactive.

“The numerous channels available on the Internet have made access to knowledge available from numerous sources and means.

“On the Internet, experts and opinion makers share and provide solutions to almost everything, from climate change to robotics, rearing fish to growing plants and even on how to repair your computers and mobile phones,” he said.

Dr Mahathir said it is common to hear both parents and teachers complaining about the time their children and students spent on the Internet but instead of decrying it, there is a need to figure out how to incorporate this into learning.

“Children in isolated areas would be able to learn from the same top teachers as students in urban schools.

“It is time to unshackle our education.

“But all these priorities will not be realised unless the powers-that-be understand and accept that pursuing them is the only way for Malaysia to remain competitive apart from surviving the pandemic ordeal,” he said.

Digitalisation of the economy should also be among Malaysia's top priorities for an improved future, he said, adding that it would bring Malaysia out of crisis sooner.

“The globalisation of today is total. It enables more and more people to embark on different kinds of businesses without the need to physically meet,” he said.

Dr Mahathir said that even for tourism and travel, promotions to the world market could be carried out more efficiently through the Internet.