

Dr M: Malaysia needs clarity to move forward

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He says the govt should also prioritise digitalisation of the economy and transformation of the education system

by S BIRRUNTHA / Pic by HUSSEIN SHAHARUDDIN

THE government must inspire confidence, provide a clear direction and political stability, and be committed to its vision in the recovery process from the Covid-19 pandemic.

Former Prime Minister (PM) Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the above would be in line with efforts to establish and present Malaysia as a prosperous, inclusive and sustainable country.

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

“The various lockdowns, confusing standard operating procedures (SOPs), mounting Covid-19 infections and death rates these past two years have all taken a toll on the Malaysian psyche.

“It is clear that until and unless the government gets its act together, and stops making decisions for political gains, we will not get out of this Covid-19 rut,” he said while delivering a closing keynote address at the Perdana Leadership Foundation CEO Forum 2021 yesterday.

He said this year has been especially hard on the country, where it saw cases rise to higher than 24,000 with a death toll that is regrettably high for a small nation.

The Langkawi MP added that in facing these unprecedented difficulties, the government must come up with creative and at times unorthodox ideas to overcome challenges.

“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 the cushy seats and get cracking.”

Besides providing a clear direction and political stability, Dr Mahathir outlined two other top priorities that the government must focus on during the recovery period.

The first priority should be given to the digitalisation of the economy — to grow and enable Malaysia to get out of the current crisis sooner.

“If there is one thing that the pandemic has taught us, it is that we cannot do without the Internet. It has created a new power of rapid and limitless communications.

“This new power enables us to communicate with friends, families, business associates and governors, regardless of place and time. It also allows us to buy and sell to anyone anywhere in the world without limits.

“Therefore, I think the digital economy is here to stay and our economy must digitalise.” The former PM said the next priority should be given to education, adding that any industry and business that wants to succeed needs to employ high-quality talent.

He emphasised that as the whole nation is forced to adapt and adopt the new normal, the country’s education system has to undergo transformation as well.

“If previously we took our time in digitalising our education, the pandemic took away that luxury and today we scramble to meet the educational needs of every single one of our children.

“Inevitably, we saw drastic changes in the way we deliver education. It can no longer be a one-way communication from teacher to student. It must be interactive.

“We need to realise that the world has changed dramatically and that our youths do not want to be taught in the same way that we were. It is time to unshackle our education,” he stressed.