

MAHATHIR: ONLY ONE PER CENT OF STUDENTS WANT TO CREATE CHAOS

Thwarting the few to protect majority...

N.S.T. 10 APR 1975 KUALA LUMPUR, Wednesday.

THE new law on universities is aimed at thwarting a handful of students from disrupting the studies of the majority in the campuses, Education Minister Dr. Mahathir Mohamed told the Dewan Rakyat last night.

He said it had been found that 99 per cent of university students did not want to be involved in demonstrations and their main preoccupation was their studies.

"We have to safeguard this majority from the one per cent who are out to create chaos," he said when replying to the debate on the Uni-

versities and University Colleges (Amendment) Bill.

The Bill was passed at about 11 p.m. after a lively five-hour debate.

One provision to make all offences under the Act "non-bailable and seizable" was deleted, following comments from both sides of the House

that it was "too harsh". Among other things, the Bill provides that students found guilty of any criminal offence may be suspended from university.

The DAP members, who were expected to strongly criticise the Bill, walked out of the House immediately after they had failed to defer the Bill for six months.

The motion, introduced by Mr. Lim Kit Siang (DAP-Kota Melaka), was rejected on a voice vote.

Inevitable

Dr. Mahathir said he was "sad" to have to present the amendments but the Government could not afford to allow a small group of students, who were not interested in pursuing their studies, to prevent others from doing so.

During the December demonstrations, many girl students wrote to him that they were afraid to attend lectures.

The Government, Dr. Mahathir said, had proof that some students had misused their privileges.

Instead of introducing new students to the life and studies in the campus, they used the time to win them to their fold to further their selfish ends.

Under the pretext of conducting social surveys for their studies, they instigated the kampung people to go against the law.

Playing around

Dr. Mahathir added: "We have been liberal to the students. But because of prevailing circumstances, including pressures from the peo-

ple, we have to introduce the amendments. We are not creating something out of a vacuum."

The Government, he reiterated could not afford to "play around." It had to make use of all available resources and time to attend to other urgent problems such as the communist terrorist threat.

He refuted the claim that the students would turn out to be mere "robots" with all these restrictions imposed on them.

On the contrary, he said, the students were made "robots" of as they could not think for themselves after listening to irresponsible speeches by their leaders.

Dr. Mahathir agreed to the suggestion that there should be dialogues between him, the students and staff.

"I had dialogues with the student representatives throughout the December demonstrations. But if such sessions meant that the Government had to accept everything brought up, they were no longer dialogues."

Boo first...

He said he was prepared to accept criticisms, including those made during university forums.

"The students used to listen first before booing but now they boo right from the start of forums. It looks as if their intention in inviting people to forums is to jeer at them. This shouldn't be the behaviour of people who are fit for the university."

Earlier, in moving the Bill, Dr. Mahathir said

academic freedom "means freedom to seek knowledge, to pursue any course of studies without being hampered or obstructed by considerations other than academic."

He continued: "It does not mean that those who stay or work in university campuses are above the law. It does not mean that crimes may be committed on university grounds with complete immunity from the processes of the laws of the country."

"The grounds of the university are not sacred and lawbreakers cannot make it a sanctuary for their illegal operations."

"I would like to emphasise here that there is no restriction on academic freedom. But the new laws do concern only the universities and they are so because the universities have failed to contain and manage problems on their own."