

Deadline for leaving campus

By

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EDUCATION MINISTER Dr. Mahathir Mohamed has ordered all Mara Institute of Technology students to vacate the Shah Alam campus by tomorrow or the police will move in.

He said that as far as possible the Government would like to avoid the use of force, and the students were being given a chance to leave the campus voluntarily.

He said he was "very unhappy with the attempts by student leaders to prevent their colleagues from leaving the campus." If the student leaders were sincere, they should allow those who wanted to leave to do so.

Girls threatened

A specific complaint had been received about intimidation. For instance, he said, five girls had reported that they were threatened that they would be stripped if they refused to follow the orders of the leaders.

Dr. Mahathir said the Government knew the people involved in the situation. About 200 students who called themselves "Gestapo" or "Music Boys" were responsible for the whole incident, he said.

"The majority of the students are innocent and sincerely wish to study."

According to him, at least 4,000 students wanted to leave but were being prevented from doing so by the leaders. (By late evening, an estimated 4,600 were still inside).

He assured parents that everything possible was being done by the MIT administration to ensure the safety of the students.

The institute was spending about \$100,000 on arrangement to send the students home. Pocket money would also be provided to those in need of it.



DR. MAHATHIR

...giving the students a chance to leave voluntarily.

Minister to MIT students: Police will go in if you stay

That offer

Dr. Mahathir also expressed full confidence in MIT's director, Datuk Lokman Musa, and in the way he was handling the situation.

On the offer by the Umno Youth education bureau to mediate in the dispute, Dr. Mahathir said: "The situation has passed the stage of negotiation. Before the authorities closed the campus, the students themselves closed it and refused to talk."

Dr. Mahathir was confident that MIT would be re-opened "as soon as the leaders are isolated from the rest of the student population."

The Minister said the Government was spending about \$100,000 a day in running the institute. "Since the Government is spending so much, it expects a proportionate return," he said.

The annual intake at MIT was about 3,500 students and the Government would like to see an equal number of graduates each year. "But due to the high rate of failures, the institute is not churning out the required number of graduates," he said.

Dr. Mahathir said the Government was considering re-registering all MIT students "to weed out those who are not interested in studying."

Radio and Television Malaysia put the Minister's message across to the students on the campus, closed since yesterday until further notice, but only about 500 students heeded the Minister's call today.

Some students, ignoring the wishes of their leaders

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Fear of leaders keeps many students inside campus

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to stay put, managed to sneak out and went home on their own; others used the buses provided by the authorities.

MIT public relations officer, Datin Sharifah Mariam Ghazali, said that late this afternoon two buses were still there but many were too scared of the student leaders to board the buses.

This morning, five buses were sent, but only about 20 students used them, she said.

Some students sneaked out last night.

This morning cooks and lorries carrying food were allowed into the campus by the students guarding the gates.

Throughout the day parents and relatives went to the campus to fetch their children, but only a few were successful in persuading the students to leave.

An ex-policeman from Kampung Petaling, Encik Abdul bin Yusuf, 64, who went to see his daughter at the campus, said she refused to leave the campus.

He said he could not sleep last night, fearing for her safety.

Police Field Force men are still manning roadblocks on the approach road to the campus and on the Federal

Highway nearby.

Dungun campus

In a statement this morning, MIT announced that due to the present unrest on the campus, students who had received letters of offer to register on Jan. 12 for the three-month courses leading to a certificate in Hotel and Restaurant Services and the Certificate of Proficiency in Foreign Languages should not report on the date specified in the notice.

Students who have been offered places for the Art Teacher's Diploma are to report as instructed to the Dungun campus on Jan. 15.

In SEREMBAN, Negri Sembilan Menteri Besar Datuk Mansor Othman, who is acting chairman of the MIT Governing Council, said the council had given a full mandate to the director, Datuk Lokman Musa, to carry out his responsibilities.

He said the students did not have any cause for rash actions as the issue involved only disciplinary rules on the length of hair, and not urgent matters like lack of food or oppression.

Shameful act

The act of the student leaders in "blowing up" the hair issue until it resulted in the takeover of the campus was shameful, particularly to the Malay community, he said.

The incident also reflected the lack of maturity of the student leaders.

The MIT students' union leader, Encik Abdullah Baba denied today that the union had taken over control of the campus.

He said the union was surprised at the decision to close the institute. The situation in the campus was peaceful and under control, he said.

"Security of the students is assured. Lecturers and the staff can continue to work in the campus, except the director, Datuk Haji Lokman Musa," he added.