

MAHATHIR - STUDENTS

FROM ABDUL RAHMAN SULAIMAN

(2)

SYDNEY, AUG. 13 (BERNAMA) -- THE MALAYSIAN GOVERNMENT PLANS TO SET UP COMMUNITY COLLEGES TO PREPARE STUDENTS FOR UNIVERSITY EDUCATION ABROAD, DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR MOHAMAD ANNOUNCED HERE.

HE SAID THE COLLEGES TO BE RUN ALONG THE SAME LINE AS THE AUSTRALIAN TAYLOR COLLEGE WOULD TAKE IN BOTH GOVERNMENT SPONSORED AND PRIVATE STUDENTS FOR FIRST YEAR COURSES IN VARIOUS DISCIPLINES.

ON COMPLETION OF THE COURSES, IT WAS HOPED THAT THE STUDENTS WOULD BE ADMITTED TO SECOND YEAR DEGREE COURSES IN ANY UNIVERSITY ABROAD. HE SAID ADDRESSING ABOUT 100 REPRESENTATIVES OF MALAYSIAN STUDENTS FROM HERE, HOBART AND MELBOURNE LAST NIGHT.

EARLIER IT WAS ANNOUNCED THAT THE MOVE WAS MEANT NOT ONLY TO CUT DOWN COST AND SAVE IN TERMS OF FOREIGN EXCHANGE BUT ALSO TO ENSURE THAT STUDENTS SENT TO STUDY OVERSEAS WERE ADEQUATELY MATURED TO MAKE THEM LESS SUSCEPTIBLE TO NEGATIVE INFLUENCES.

THE PRIME MINISTER SAID HE RAISED THE PROPOSAL DURING HIS DISCUSSIONS IN CANBERRA LAST WEEK WITH HIS AUSTRALIAN COUNTERPART ENCIK BOB HAWKE WHO PROMISED TO PERSUADE UNIVERSITIES HERE TO SEND THEIR TEACHERS TO TEACH IN THE PROPOSED COLLEGES. -- MORE

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+ THIS WILL FACILITATE THE RECOGNITION OF THE CURRICULUM OFFERED BY THESE COLLEGES? HE SAID.

DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR EXPLAINED THAT A START HAD ALREADY BEEN MADE IN THIS DIRECTION WHEN GOVERNMENT SPONSORED STUDENTS SELECTED TO BE SENT OVERSEAS WERE REQUIRED TO UNDERGO LOCALLY A SIX-MONTH ORIENTATION COURSE DURING WHICH THEY WERE REQUIRED TO PASS THEIR TOEFL (ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEST).

ON THE POSSIBILITY OF AUSTRALIA INCREASING EDUCATION FEES FOR FOREIGN STUDENTS TO FOLLOW IN BRITAIN'S FOOTSTEP, THE PRIME MINISTER SAID IT WAS AUSTRALIA'S RIGHT TO DO SO AS AN INDEPENDENT NATION.

HOWEVER HE DID MENTION TO ENCIK HAWKE DURING THEIR DISCUSSIONS THAT IT WAS ALSO IN AUSTRALIA'S INTEREST TO MAINTAIN THE PRESENCE OF FOREIGN STUDENTS IN ITS UNIVERSITIES AS THE COUNTRY WOULD INVARIABLY GAIN, IN TERMS OF FOREIGN EXCHANGE.

HE SAID IN SO FAR AS MALAYSIA WAS CONCERNED ANY MOVE BY AUSTRALIA TO INCREASE EDUCATIONAL FEES WOULD CERTAINLY BE A DRAIN ON US.

+ WE HAVE ALREADY MADE OUR REPRESENTATION TO THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT ON THE PLIGHT OF THE STUDENTS, ESPECIALLY THAT OF THE 9,500 WHO ARE ALREADY HERE, + HE SAID. -- MORE.

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DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR SAID THAT HE WAS GLAD THAT ENCIK HAWKE WAS SYMPATHETIC TO MALAYSIAN IN THIS RESPECT.

ON THE QUESTION OF GOVERNMENT SURVEILLANCE ON MALAYSIAN STUDENTS OVERSEAS INCLUDING THOSE IN AUSTRALIA, THE PRIME MINISTER POINTED OUT THE GOVERNMENT FELT IT WAS ITS OBLIGATION TO DO SO JUST AS THE STUDENTS SHOULD FEEL THAT IT WAS THEIR OBLIGATION TO STUDY.

THE GOVERNMENT HAD TO KNOW THE ACTIVITIES OF STUDENTS TO PROVIDE THEM WITH BENEFICIAL GUIDANCE SO THAT THEY WOULD NOT BE INVOLVED IN UNHEALTHY ACTIVITIES.

+IN THE CASE OF GOVERNMENT SPONSORED STUDENTS, THEY ARE BOUND BY THEIR CONTRACTS TO STUDY HARD AND SERVE THE COUNTRY ON THEIR RETURN HOME AFTER THEIR STUDIES, HE SAID.

+IN THE CASE OF PRIVATE STUDENTS, WE STILL HAVE TO PROTECT THEM BECAUSE WHEN THEY ARE IN TROUBLE, THEY'LL COME TO OUR MISSION FOR HELP. + - - M O R E

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EARLIER, A REPRESENTATIVE OF THE STUDENTS ENCIK FELIX CHONG PLEDGED FULL SUPPORT FOR THE GOVERNMENT UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR WHICH, HE SAID, HAD DONE A LOT FOR THE COUNTRY.

HE SAID THAT EVEN IF THERE WAS SOME OPPOSITIONS TO THE GOVERNMENT'S POLICIES VOICED BY SOME STUDENTS HERE, THEY DID NOT REPRESENT THE MAJORITY OPINION OF THE MALAYSIAN STUDENTS IN AUSTRALIA.

+THEY ARE ONLY THE VOICES OF SOME DESPERATE MINORITY GROUPS WHO ARE NOT EVEN MALAYSIANS AND HAD NEVER BEEN TO THE COUNTRY, ENCIK CHONG SAID.

-SHORTLY BEFORE THE DIALOGUE BEGAN, TWO GROUPS OF OPPOSING YOUTHS, EACH NUMBERING ABOUT 20 STAGED SEPARATE PEACEFUL DEMONSTRATIONS IN FRONT OF THE SHERATON-WENTWORTH HOTEL WHERE DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR AND MEMBERS OF HIS PARTY WERE STAYING.

THE ANTI-GOVERNMENT GROUP, ALL WEARING MASKS, SAID THEY WERE DEMONSTRATING IN RESPONSE TO WHAT THEY TERMED THE VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS BY THE MALAYSIAN GOVERNMENT, INCLUDING THE SURVEILLANCE ON MALAYSIAN STUDENTS OVERSEAS. --MORE

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+MALAYSIAN STUDENTS STUDYING IN AUSTRALIA AND ELSEWHERE HAVE BEEN FACING THE THREAT OF POLITICAL REPRISALS ON RETURNING HOME, A SPOKESMAN OF THE GROUP, RUTH JOST, SAID IN A STATEMENT.

SHE SAID THE PROTESTORS WHO WERE MEMBERS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF NEWSOUTHWALES STUDENTS UNION HAD TO COVER THEIR IDENTITY TO PROTECT THEMSELVES AND THEIR FAMILIES IN MALAYSIA FROM THE POLITICAL REPRISAL.

HOWEVER A CHECK MADE LATER REVEALED THAT HARDLY TWO OF THEM WERE MALAYSIANS.

THE ANTI-GOVERNMENT DEMONSTRATORS WERE MATCHED BY THE PRO-GOVERNMENT GROUP COMPRISING MALAYSIAN STUDENTS HERE.

THEY SANG PATRIOTIC SONGS AND ACCUSED THE YOUTHS HIDING BEHIND THE MASKS AS IGNORANT FELLOWS WHO KNEW NOTHING ABOUT MALAYSIA. --BEHNAME