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Mahathir-students

IMPROVE ENGLISH CALL TO MALAYSIAN STUDENTS

From Salmy Hashim

BLOOMINGTON (INDIANA), May 8 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr

Mahathir Mohamad Saturday advised Malaysian students overseas to strive to improve their English to acquire more knowledge and contribute to Malaysia's progress.

He told more than 200 students from 20 universities in the United States that mastering the language did not mean that Malaysians had no love for the Malay language.

"In fact, we will enrich the Malay language because we can borrow (words) from other languages," he said.

He said the students must understand that it would be impossible for intellectuals and professionals to translate hundreds of thousands of documents or every book in the world into Malay, or to expect the American lecturers to teach in Malay.

"This is the reality ... we will lag behind if we wait for them to do so. We do not want our people to be looked down upon by others," he said.

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Dr Mahathir also said that he was aware of people who criticised the government for wanting to use English as the medium of instruction in selected subjects.

"But then, some of those who criticise had obtained their doctorate in the English Language," he said, and the students responded with laughter.

He said that at a time when an abundance of sophisticated information was available, Malaysians should acquire knowledge to compete with other countries, adding that the government spent more on education than defence.

Just before dinner, many of the students snapped photographs of the prime minister and his wife, Datuk Seri Datin Paduka Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamed Ali, and gathered enough courage to be photographed with "the night's most popular couple".

At a dialogue session, Dr Mahathir replied to every question the students put forward that the 30-minute session extended to two hours.

They did not ask ordinary questions, such as those relating to scholarships, but more serious questions on matters such as education, Hudud laws, Vision 2020, Dr Mahathir's meeting with US President Bill Clinton, and Malaysia's relationship with Australia and Britain. -- more

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*Mahathir - overseas trips*

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Asked about the date for the next general election, Dr Mahathir replied: "I want to tell you the date of the election ... it is not later than December 1995." The term of the current Parliament ends then.

A student, saying he was a big fan of Dr Mahathir, asked how one could enter politics.

Dr Mahathir replied that one must have plenty of patience, must work hard and must like people.

"It took me 19 years to be picked as a candidate for the post of MP and 30 years to become a minister. But it's a pity that there is only one vacancy for prime minister," he said.

Dr Mahathir, who is on a three-day unofficial visit to the United States, met with Clinton in Washington yesterday, stopped over in St Louis to visit the McDonell Douglas plant, and came to Bloomington to see his wife receive an honorary doctorate from the University of Indiana and to meet Malaysian students.

Tomorrow, he will go to Seattle to visit the Boeing plant and will begin a two-day visit to China on Monday. -- Bernama

▼08/05/17-05MST