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Mahathir-University

MORE UNIVERSITIES IF MALAYS ARE KEEN TO STUDY

ALOR SETAR, Aug 4 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the government will build more universities if the Malays show that they are truly keen to pursue higher education.

"If the Malays are keen to study, the government can set up more universities but if they are not keen then the government will lose as it has to come up with massive funds to set up such universities," he said during the adjournment speech at the Kubang Pasu Umno division delegates meeting at the Jitra Hall, near here, today.

Earlier, a representative from the Umno Hosba branch, Prof Yusof Hasan when tabling the resolution, suggested that the government set up the International Malay University (UMAT) in Hosba to provide more opportunities for Malays to pursue higher education.

Dr Mahathir said the Malays are actually intelligent and capable but they do not show interest to pursue education at a higher level.

"The government can set up the university but it will face problems to find students especially in disciplines such as science and technology which are very much needed by the nation.

"If we merely ask for universities to be set up but don't have any interest to enter university then I think it will be a waste," he said.

The Prime Minister said as the government has to spend large sums of money, it wants to see the younger Malay generation achieve a higher level of education.

He said the government does not want to see the universities being set up only to be filled by other people while the Malays do not benefit at all.

"We find that the children of the other races are serious in their studies, they truly pay much attention to education, that is why we see not many Chinese are involved in activities such as 'bohsia' and other things which bring no benefits," he added.

In this context, Dr Mahathir called on the delegates to seriously think about the matter and urged them to be more active in developing interest in their children to pursue higher education.

Commenting on the resolution by the representative from the division's Youth movement, Abdul Lafar Yahya, which calls on the government to increase the padi price, Dr Mahathir said although the price of padi had not been increased, the income of padi farmers had increased.

"Better padi strain had been produced, although land had not expanded, income had increased especially now that padi is being cultivated twice a year.

"What is important is not the increase in padi price but the income of farmers. The government helps farmers by increasing their padi yield and as such their income also increases," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the government does not want a situation whereby when padi price is increased, there will also be an increase in the smuggling of rice from neighbouring countries where the price of padi is much cheaper.

In his speech which lasted about 20 minutes, the Prime Minister also congratulated national badminton players Rashid Sidek (singles) and the doubles pair of Cheah Soon Kit and Yap Kim Hock for winning the bronze and silver medals respectively at the 1996 Atlanta Olympic Games, in the United States.

Meanwhile, at a press conference after the delegates meeting, he said

he was proud that two women delegates had been chosen to attend the general assembly in Kuala Lumpur.

He said the victory by a branch Wanita head, Barishah Saad who secured the highest votes and the win by Asma Hussin show that if there was any elements of bribery in the divisional election, it is clear that it was not effective.

"Maybe it is because I have warned (about bribery) this morning," he said referring to his opening speech earlier urging delegates to reject candidates offering bribes.

Dr Mahathir said there was also a suggestion that the divisional Wanita head be made a delegate automatically to the general assembly but the suggestion had not been accepted yet. -- BERNAMA

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