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Significant savings if students remain here

KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. - Substantial national savings could be made by reducing dependence on foreign workers and sending fewer students abroad to pursue tertiary education, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

While there must be stricter and minimum use of foreign workers, he said the country could not do away with them entirely.

Dr Mahathir said the Government could not stop foreign workers remitting money back to their home countries.

Addressing more than 350 participants at a dialogue with port users and promoting Port Klang as a national load centre, he said:

"Among other measures that the Government had taken to stop the outflow of funds is to reduce the number of students going abroad for further studies."

In the past, he said many students were sent overseas. There is no such need now that there are many universities in the country. Many of them have twinning programmes with local and foreign institutions.

"Students could pursue their education here for two years before they leave for overseas. In fact, there are even opportunities now to complete tertiary education without having to go overseas."

He said the move to send students overseas was to expose them to life abroad and have a better outlook of the culture there, but "these have now all changed".

In the case of Malay students, he said they live among themselves when they go abroad.

"The modern Malay student does not go to pubs any more, which is a good thing, of course. But they stay together and do not mix with the locals, as if they have exported Malay villages to overseas."

There are also some Malay students abroad who only mix with people from own States, with Kelantanese staying with Kelantanese, and Kedahans staying with Kedahans.

Despite all this, he said the Government would continue to send students overseas to do their post-graduate courses in order to acquire knowledge and technology.

On foreign workers, Dr Mahathir said the Government wanted to minimise the use of their services. Depending too much on them also created social problems.

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