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Mahathir-Democracy

DON'T WASTE TIME AND BRAINPOWER ON DEMOS, SAYS PM

BETONG (SARAWAK), Aug 6 (Bernama) -- Malaysians should not waste their time and brainpower on demonstrations merely for the sake of upholding their rights in a democracy, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

He said they should instead make the most of the prevailing peace and stability by combining efforts towards nation-building and creating plentiful job opportunities for Malaysians and school-leavers later.

"The Barisan Nasional component parties have altogether five million members. If all of us were to demonstrate day in and day out, the country will go to pieces," he said.

Dr Mahathir, who was on the last day of a two-day working visit to Sarawak, gave the reminder when opening the RM16-million Betong Technical School here.

While the governing BN coalition preoccupied itself with thinking of ways to develop the country for further well-being of the people, opposition parties seemed to be bent on staging destructive demonstrations, said Dr Mahathir who is also BN chairman.

"Democracy is an ideal system but we'll not benefit from democracy when we become overly democratic by granting people rights to commit irresponsible acts," he said.

He said Malaysians at large, students in particular, need not have to attend school should they choose to join street demonstrations like those organised by the opposition.

One would not need to go to school merely to learn how to burn rubbish dumps and damage vehicles, he said.

"Even if we were to take the brain out of their heads and leave them totally empty, they can still set fire to rubbish dumps and dent cars without having to go to school, let alone the university. What's the use of having a brain if we don't use it," he said.

Dr Mahathir said education was crucial for uplifting a person's position, including financially, and stressed the need for balancing students' progress with that of the country.

"It is for this reason that we've been constantly developing the country so that highly qualified Malaysians secure jobs and salaries commensurate with their qualifications," he said.

The prime minister said he did not want to see highly qualified Malaysians ending up being bus conductors and waiters as was the case in some countries.

"In fact highly qualified citizens of the country are still able to secure employment in positions proportionate to their qualifications. Only the choosy ones or those reluctant to move to places with abundant opportunities end up jobless," he said.

The prime minister reminded undergraduates that there were indebted to taxpayers whose money were used to build educational infrastructure and to finance their tertiary education.

He said that fees paid by undergraduates only made up 10 per cent of lecturers' pay and universities provided them with all sorts of facilities for them to acquire knowledge in decent comfort.

He said since a large segment of the students received scholarships from government agencies, they were virtually enjoying free tertiary education.

As such they could repay society by concentrating on their studies and not waste public money by indulging in demonstrations, he said.

"Students wasting public money are those given places but neglect their studies and instead preoccupy themselves with demonstrations which don't contribute towards their academic performance," he said.

In his speech at the function, Education Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak said the federal government allocated RM840 million to further develop education in Sarawak under the Seventh Malaysia Plan.

Following a mid-term review of the Plan, Sarawak received a supplementary allocation of RM251 million, bringing the total allocation for the state's educational development to RM1 billion, he said.

He also said that the Betong Technical School would be expanded until it could accommodate 800 students.

Also present were the prime minister's wife Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamad Ali, Sarawak Chief Minister Tan Sri Abdul Taib Mahmud, Information Minister Tan Sri Khalil Yaakob and Science, Technology and Environment Minister Datuk Law Hieng Ding.

-- BERNAMA

MT RYN