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Mahathir-Dialogue

DR MAHATHIR CLEARS THE AIR IN DIALOGUE

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 9 (Bernama) -- The dialogue with more than 4,000 university students today has enabled Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad to clear the air on current political developments in the country.

The dialogue also enhanced ties between Dr Mahathir and students who were previously perceived as being anti-government due to the economic crisis and domestic political problems.

The dialogue seemed to have met the aspirations of the students, based on the questions posed and Dr Mahathir himself has called for more frequent meetings with them after this.

Dr Mahathir still maintains a good perception of the students.

"I have always believed that not all students are against the government ... just because of one bad apple, the rest will be called bad," he later told the media.

This was the first meeting between Dr Mahathir and students since the sacking of his deputy, Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, in September last year.

The Prime Minister also took the opportunity to explain to the students, before the dialogue started, as to why it appeared as though he was keeping a distance from them.

The main reason was that meetings with students was left to Anwar since he was to take over the reins of power.

Attention was given to students following their involvement in several anti-government demonstrations after Anwar's sacking.

The students' involvement was an indication of how easy it was for the group to be taken in by the allegations made by the opposition parties.

The dialogue with the Prime Minister, held at the Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) in Bangi today, proved that the students in fact want information and clear explanations from national leaders on current issues.

Dr Mahathir, who was given a rousing welcome, had explained measures taken by the government on subject considered controversial including Anwar's sacking from the government and from Umno and national economic recovery efforts.

"I am satisfied with the meeting. The students seem friendly, their response is very encouraging," he said.

"The claim that students are anti-government is not true."

Several students met later welcomed the holding of such a meeting and hoped it could be continued from time to time, including with other national leaders.

UKM undergraduate Davinder Singh, 20, said meeting the students was the right move by the Prime Minister.

"I now understand better issues such as currency control and other measures taken," he said.

A Universiti Utara Malaysia student, Mohamad Abu Bakar, 23, said students should listen to explanations from both sides - the government and the opposition - before making their own conclusions.

"We were fed with only negative information by the opposition. Today, we are given explanations by the Prime Minister himself and now I understand better what really happened," he said.

-- BERNAMA

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