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Dr M: Don't jeopardise your future (HL)

Chok Suat Ling

KUALA LUMPUR, Sun. - Reminding students and undergraduates not to be involved in or allow themselves to be used in reformasi demonstrations, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said they should instead concentrate on their studies.

The Prime Minister said they should make studies their priority and not engage in activities which were of no benefit to them.

Dr Mahathir said: "If we do not respect the country's laws, its legal system and the courts, then all of us will suffer."

He said those who chose to break the country's laws would be the very ones that would end up as victims, adding that the demonstrators had tarnished the country's image as well as their own.

They could also have jeopardised their future, he added.

Sporadic demonstrations took place in some parts of the city after former Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim's guilty verdict was passed on Wednesday.

Since then, police have detained 118 people, believed to be Anwar's supporters, in various parts of the city for participating in illegal assemblies. Yesterday, 32 students and undergraduates were among those detained.

The police are not ruling out the possibility that some of the demonstrators were paid to stage protests in the Federal capital. An assortment of dangerous weapons was also seized during the demonstrations.

Dr Mahathir was speaking to reporters after visiting the Islamic Arts Museum to view the exhibition entitled Reflections of an Ideal World: Islamic Carpets From Dar Al-Athar Al-Islamiyyah, Kuwait.

The exhibition, which was opened yesterday, will end on July 17.

Dr Mahathir, who arrived at the museum at 9.30am, was accompanied by museum director Syed Mohamad Albukhary and Albukhary Foundation chairman Datuk Syed Mokhtar Albukhary during the tour.

This is Dr Mahathir's first public appearance after being discharged from the National Heart Institute where he was treated for lung infection. He was admitted to the institute on April 2 after returning from the haj.

On the denial by Pas that its members were involved in the demonstrations, Dr Mahathir said: "Although Pas denies involvement, we see its flags being carried ... we also see the presence of what appears to be Pas supporters.

"Keadilan (Parti Keadilan Nasional) may also deny involvement but it is firing the enthusiasm of demonstrators and giving them the semangat (spirit) to carry out these improper acts."

In fact, some of the protesters were wearing Keadilan tags and were seen burning dustbins and flags of the ruling coalition.

On the response of several world leaders to Anwar's sentence, the Prime Minister said the leaders should see to their own countries first.

"There are many injustices in their countries, lies and Ministers involved in corruption. Some are blatantly unjust to minority groups until today.

"In New York and London, men of African descent were killed ... in London, by a policeman. In Australia, the children of Aborigines were separated from their parents..."

Among those who criticised the Government for Anwar's guilty verdict were US Vice-President Al Gore who had decried the "stiff sentence"

imposed on Anwar, saying it threatened to set back Malaysia's economic and political progress.

Australian Prime Minister John Howard had described the sentence as "a lurch towards authoritarianism" in Malaysia.

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