

15 OCT 1999

Students-Gathering

STUDENTS' GATHERING AT UM NOT ANTI-GOVERNMENT

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 15 (Bernama) -- Last week's gathering of some 300 students at Universiti Malaya (UM) was not an anti-government assembly, but was held to show support for Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi during his visit there, a UM students' representative said today.

Pemuda Negara president Stephen Doss said it was regrettable that the gathering had been misunderstood, especially by the UM administration and the Education Ministry.

The students, from public and private institutions of higher learning, also handed over a memorandum to Abdullah after he had spoken at the UM Alumni Premier Lecture on Oct 8.

Doss told reporters this after handing a protest letter to the Associated Press (AP) office here concerning its report that described the gathering as peaceful opposition to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

"The AP report gives the impression that the gathering was protesting against the government in connection with Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim's arsenic poisoning case," he said.

Pemuda Negara and two other students' organisations -- Angkatan Pemuda Warisan and University Students National Action Front -- want AP to make an open apology for its report.

Abdullah met the students at the gathering, and promised to study their memorandum and to have a dialogue with them.

As a result, 35 student leaders from various organisations and universities have been invited by Abdullah for a closed-door dialogue at Putrajaya tomorrow.

Doss was accompanied by about 20 students to hand over the protest letter to AP's bureau chief Beth Duff-Brown.

-- BERNAMA

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