

17/05/2000

Be real professionals, teachers urged

Manan Osman; Mimi Syed Yusof

IPOH, Tues. - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad wants teachers to carry out their duties professionally and not use the profession to further their personal interests.

"Only by being a real professional, can the country expect to produce a future generation that is excellent in all aspects," he said.

Unfortunately, he said, some teachers had fallen prey to political influence and were willing to sacrifice the future of children to vent their anger at certain people.

Blaming politicians for giving rise to such a situation, he said: "That is why we want teachers to be true professionals.

"The Government has no problem with teachers. We accord them excellent treatment," he told reporters after launching this year's national level Teachers' Day celebration at the State Government's administrative complex - Bangunan Perak Darul Ridzuan.

He said there were also politicians who were out to instil undesirable attitudes among schoolchildren with the hope of them becoming supporters later on.

"They went to the extent of influencing students to get involved in politics, spreading lies and rumours and demanding they hold demonstrations. This is not good.

"Government parties have no plans to do such a thing although we are in power and can use them (the students) for our benefit.

"However, since they have deviated, we think it is our responsibility to give them correct information. We are not trying to campaign but merely to give them information and correct their perception."

Dr Mahathir said he would also try to meet as many teachers as possible to foster a closer rapport with them, although it would be impossible to meet each of the over 300,000 teachers in the country.

"As far as possible I will meet the (union) leaders," he said.

He also said the Government did not like to make it difficult for teachers or take disciplinary action against them unless they were involved in "really bad" cases.

"We will try to instil in them a sense of responsibility towards their profession, their responsibilities to the people and the country," he said.

Earlier in his speech, Dr Mahathir said teachers could not discard their responsibilities although they may not like the Government.

"Just because we are not satisfied with a particular group, we should not destroy the future of our people and nation by instilling negative values among our students which may lead to disunity and weakness."

He said those who would ultimately become victims of negative influence would be "our own children and grandchildren".

On Teachers Day, he said the teaching fraternity should realise that teachers had two major responsibilities entrusted to them.

One which is often associated with teachers is the dissemination of knowledge so that the people would be educated, and at the same time contribute to the development of the nation.

However, Dr Mahathir said the necessity for teachers to go for retraining could not be avoided in view of the more sophisticated methods of teaching and teaching aids currently in use.

"Teachers who are acutely aware of their responsibilities would not

hesitate to learn new teaching methods and techniques."

Dr Mahathir also said teachers must be prepared to teach in smart schools as the Government planned to turn all schools into smart schools.

Also present were Perak Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Tajol Rosli Ghazali, Education Minister Tan Sri Musa Mohamad and Education director-general Datuk Seri Abdul Shukor Abdullah.

(END)