

12/06/2000

`Consider future of your children'

Saiful Azhar Abdullah in London

IN a frank talk with Malaysian students at Malaysia Hall on Friday, Deputy Education Minister Datuk Aziz Shamsuddin asked them how they would want to be remembered.

Fielding questions from the floor on anti-Government sentiment among university students, he said they could choose either to be remembered as a generation responsible for destroying the present social and political system or as a generation responsible for sustaining it.

Acknowledging that anti-Government sentiment among the Malays, as reflected in the recent general election, was unprecedented, Aziz said they should ask themselves whether they wanted their children to inherit the problems they would be creating.

In his opinion, the Malays had taken things for granted after 43 years of independence.

The anti-Government sentiment, he said, was not only prevalent among university students, but also among civil servants, including teachers.

"In the yesteryears, teachers looked upon their vocation as a noble profession despite being paid a pittance.

"But now they are saying that we need to practise free democracy," Aziz said, adding that he viewed the latest stance of the Malays as "a tendency to forget their perimeter".

"They didn't realise that they were destroying the very system that provided them their `shelter'," he said.

Aziz, himself a former English teacher, recounted his experience in the 1960s when getting past Standard Five was considered an achievement for Malay pupils.

There were only 11 Malay doctors then.

Among them were Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali and Dr Ruby Majid.

But today, after more than 30 years, Malays could be proud in having more than 5,000 Malay doctors, Aziz said.

"We are now spending about RM500,000 to produce a Malay doctor. It is from this very same political system and Government which gave these achievements to the Malays.

"We are not asking them to be supporters of Barisan Nasional. Our only request is not to destroy the very system that has benefited them," he added.

Aziz said the Government would be meeting civil servants, including teachers, to find out "what went wrong".

"We want to hear from them what is wrong with the Government. Has the country gone to shambles?"

Asked whether the Government was scared of street demonstrations, as seen from its response to such actions, Aziz said: "Yes, we fear street demonstrations.

"But we are not scared of the demonstrators. We are scared of the effects of demonstrations because they will destroy what we have built for ourselves.

"We are afraid that these demonstrations will undermine investors' confidence," he said, adding that it was the presence of foreign investors that had enabled the Government to build up the nation.

Aziz arrived in the United Kingdom last week to attend a series of meetings with Malaysian students in Cardiff, London, Leeds, Manchester,

Edinburgh in Scotland and Cork and Dublin in Ireland.
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