

02/05/2000

PM's reminder to Malay students

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KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. - Malay students were tonight reminded by the Prime Minister to maintain unity and to ensure complacency does not set in.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said although the country's independence had brought much progress and development with various assistance and facilities provided for them, the importance of staying united should not be ignored.

"Students now face less pressure and no longer have the feeling of being suppressed as compared to those studying before independence. As a result, they allow unity among them to falter.

"They no longer feel the need to close ranks (and) as the country progresses, the gap among them widens," he said at the Federation of Peninsular Malaysia Malay Students' (GPMS) Golden Jubilee dinner at the Putra World Trade Centre.

Dr Mahathir said during the pre-independence period, Malay students realised that they had to stay united to champion their cause effectively, resulting in the establishment of the GPMS.

"But today, there are those who feel this is no longer necessary as everything will be provided by the Government, and that their future is assured. They then consider bodies like GPMS irrelevant."

Describing it as a misplaced opinion, Dr Mahathir reminded them that GPMS still had a role to play in bringing progress and development to Malay students.

"We are still not that strong ... we still face various dangers, therefore, we just cannot discard bodies like GPMS.

"Despite achieving progress, we have yet to become a race that can just set aside unity among the people. We must not forget that strength is derived from unity."

Later, the Prime Minister launched the federation's vision titled Agenda 20 and fund. He also presented awards to three GPMS former leaders in recognition of their contributions.

They were his wife Datuk Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali, one of the federation's founder members, GPMS first president Datuk Paduka Abdul Wahab Ariff and former Universiti Teknologi Malaysia vice-chancellor Tan Sri Ainuddin Abdul Wahid.

The fund received a big boost soon after its launching when it collected RM1.16 million in donations.

The biggest donor was England Optical Sdn Bhd which gave RM1.06 million in the form of scholarships, besides 200 pairs of glasses.

Speaking to reporters later, Dr Siti Hasmah said the federation was still relevant as continuous efforts had to be carried out for the betterment of Malay students.

Recalling events leading to the formation of the GPMS in 1948, she said Malay students then faced many challenges to further their studies due to the lack of scholarships and opportunities.

Tuition classes were held to ensure students excel.

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