

STICK TO STUDIES

STAR - 2 JUL 2007

Keep politics out of campus, says PM

By SA'ODAH ELIAS

KUALA LUMPUR: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad told university students yesterday not to meddle in the running of the government and to keep politics out of the campus.

"You don't want outsiders to meddle in your business. By the same virtue, you must not meddle in others' too.

"I am the Prime Minister and it is my responsibility to administer the government, so don't interfere in the government's business," he told about 2,000 student leaders from all the local universities during a dialogue after closing a symposium themed *Reaffirming the Idealism of Under-*

graduates in the New Millennium at Universiti Malaya.

The event was held at the Auditorium Perdanasiswa after the original venue, Dewan Tunku Canselor, was razed on Friday.

Dr Mahathir urged the undergraduates to learn from what had happened in a neighbouring country where the students overthrew the administration but did not gain anything.

He stressed the need for students to adopt proper approaches to achieving their objective instead of whatever means to justify the end, adding that they should use their right to vote if they wanted to change the government because the ballot symbolised

the ultimate power of the people.

"That is a smarter way than destroying everything around us. We'll have nothing left if we do this," he said.

Earlier in his speech, Dr Mahathir lamented that universities were no longer used by students to gain knowledge but to get involved in undesirable activities, including burning down buildings, in apparent reference to the fire.

Arson has not been ruled out as the cause as there had been attempts to stop Dr Mahathir from visiting the university and prevent students from attending the symposium which started on Saturday.

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Concentrate on studies, students told

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The Prime Minister advised the students, especially the Malays, to concentrate on their studies and not to indulge in street protests, demonstrations, rioting and other unlawful activities.

"If you are serious in wanting to develop your community, then master all the knowledge that you can. This is a more effective way than demonstrating and rioting," he said.

He added that one did not need a university education to hold street demonstrations because "even idiots can do this."

"We come to the university because we have higher potential than people who run riot in the streets," he said.

Dr Mahathir also urged the Malays to stop sending memorandum after memorandum to the Government asking for aid and other things for themselves.

Such an approach, he said, was no longer suitable because the time had come for them to stand on their own feet.

"How much longer must the Malays depend on the Government and the privileges accorded them? How much longer must they remain mediocre?

"How do you view the beg-

gars on the street and then ask yourself what is the difference between their circumstances and yours?" he asked.

Dr Mahathir said the Government had done so much to elevate the position of the Malays, be it in business or education so that their achievement would be on par with the other races, but yet these efforts were never enough.

He said if the Malays could compete on the same level with other races there would no longer be a need for them

to restrict themselves to the quota for everything.

"Must we lower the eligibility standard to the point where even 'useless' students can go to university just so that we can fill up the 55% bumiputra quota in the local public universities?"

"If so, we must remember that some of the students who go to university in this manner will some day become doctors and engineers. How can we entrust our life to such doctors or what will be the quality

of our infrastructures if they are built by such engineers?" he asked.

Dr Mahathir said it would have been much easier to tackle the problem affecting the Malays if they were proven stupid because all that was required would be to encourage them to study harder.

However, he said, the underlying reason was much more difficult to address because it was caused by negative attitude and their reluctance to work hard.