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Dr M: Radical action needed (HL)

Ramlan Said; Firdaus Abdullah

KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. - The Government intends to introduce several radical measures, including possible reduction in the number of Bumiputera students in universities over a certain period, to check the moral decay and lacklustre performance of Malay students.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the measures were necessary as the Government wanted to address the rot that was setting in among the students.

Furthermore, the Government would no longer tolerate attempts by certain quarters bent on leading students astray and involving them in unproductive activities.

Speaking after chairing an Umno supreme council meeting at Menara Dato' Onn, Dr Mahathir, who is also party president, said some people were convinced the Government would continue to provide assistance and facilities to the students even though their results were poor.

Warning that the rot had to be addressed immediately, he said: "If there is a need to reduce the number of places for Bumiputera students in public institutions of higher learning, we will do it."

As the performance of Malay students was still poor despite government assistance, Dr Mahathir said they needed to be shown the reality when such aid were to be reduced or withdrawn.

"We will (then) find some faculties (in universities) with no Malay students at all. Perhaps for one year, university admission is to be based on meritocracy and we will see what happens."

Dr Mahathir said the Government had to do something now as the future of the younger generation and the country were at stake.

For example, he said the education system had been abused and the Government would not condone this any more. Action would also be taken against those who did not implement the education policy.

"If necessary, we will amend the laws and even the Federal Constitution so that our education system will no longer be betrayed by certain parties."

On whether the Government and Umno were prepared for any political backlash arising from these measures, he replied: "There will be a backlash but this is too serious a matter for us to be giving political consideration.

"That's why I call people who are trying to make political capital out of this as traitors."

While the Government tried very hard to improve the performance of Malay students, he said certain quarters had been influencing them to neglect their studies.

Dr Mahathir said the supreme council deliberated at length the moral decline and poor performance of Malay students, where some were reportedly involved in crimes like murder and rape.

"And now we find them to be involved in anti-religion movements, worshipping the devil and so on. This is a serious matter and if firm measures are not taken to curb such activities, there is a possibility that the situation will get worse."

What was disappointing, said Dr Mahathir, was that the problems were more apparent among Malay students even though other races were also exposed to the same environment.

Realising that whatever efforts introduced to eradicate social ills

would not be successful if there were weaknesses in its implementation, Dr Mahathir said a special body comprising government and education officers would be formed to improve the situation.

"We want people to volunteer their services ... there will be no allowances and things like that. If they are really keen, love this country and are patriotic, they should be part of this effort without expecting any returns," he said.

"We hope it will receive the support of education officers, teachers and academicians who realise their responsibility and are willing to help us improve the situation."

On who would head the body, he said it had not been decided yet but noted that Education Minister Tan Sri Musa Mohamed would play a role in it. He also said that the body would start functioning as soon as possible. Dr Mahathir said a new teaching method would be introduced in which teachers would act as facilitators.

"They will teach according to a specific curriculum that will be made known to schools through the Internet. This is to ensure there will be no deviation in the subjects taught, such as pupils being asked to make drawings related to certain political parties."

On whom he was referring to as traitors, he replied: "We don't have to say it but people will have to make certain assumptions."

Elaborating, he said whenever the Government wanted to do something good, it would be politicised and twisted by these people to suit their political interests.

"This is why many of our attempts to help the Malays have failed because all the time these people will always come out and make a political issue out of them," he said.