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Mahathir-Utar

ELIGIBILITY MUST BE CRITERIA TO ENTER UTAR, SAYS DR M

KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 4 (Bernama) -- Eligibility must be the criteria for student intake into Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman (Utar) although it was a private university owned by MCA and opened to all races, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

"Utar is open to all races but students from all races must have the eligibility to enter it," he said when asked to comment on the assurance by MCA president Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik that students from all races would have an opportunity to enrol in Utar to further their studies.

Dr Mahathir said other races cannot blame MCA or the Chinese community if they do not have the eligibility to enter the university.

"If they are not qualified or sometimes they are not interested, we cannot fault the MCA, cannot blame the Chinese, they (MCA) open the university for all races, no quota," he told a media conference after opening the 48th MCA General Assembly.

The Education Ministry had on July 5 offered MCA to set up a private university which the party named as Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman (Utar) after Malaysia's Father of Independence and first Prime Minister.

Asked whether there is a proposal to turn Utar into a public university, Dr Mahathir said if there is such a suggestion, it must be studied thoroughly.

In his opening address, Dr Mahathir, who is also Barisan Nasional (BN) chairman, said the government approved Utar as it believed the university would not be used exclusively for the Chinese.

Other races would also have access to the university, he said.

Asked to comment on the arrests of eight men, including a PAS Youth leader under the Internal Security Act (ISA) for alleged involvement in an Islamic militant cell, Dr Mahathir said: "We don't know what party but we know there are PAS members who have gone for training overseas, involved with the Taliban (in Afghanistan) and have taken up arms in a foreign country.

"They have returned to the country now and we didn't act upon their return. Only when we found that they intend to resort to violent actions including committing murders, rob banks, explode bombs, this we cannot allow in our country, that's why they were detained," he said.

Dr Mahathir said there are PAS members who are law-abiding and conformed to the democratic process but there are also those who resorted to extreme actions.

"Some are of the opinion that the democratic process was too slow or will not bring success to them. So, they are more comfortable with violence to topple the government, to commit murders and so on," he said.

Inspector-General of Police Tan Sri Norian Mai said yesterday that the eight ISA detainees are believed to be involved in militant activities in a renegade group called Kumpulan Mujahidin Malaysia (KMM).

On the suggestion by the Malaysian Human Rights Commission (Suhakam) that peaceful gatherings should be allowed, Dr Mahathir said: "Suhakam seems to be setting up standards of their own, they are not interested in the nation's security."

He said Suhakam was free to express its opinion and forward proposals but the government must give priority to the interests of the majority.

"Suhakam is just one group of people, the interests of the majority of the people has to be taken into consideration. We think in this country

there are more freedom than in many other countries, including some of the developed nations," he said.

Suhakam, in its 32-page report released yesterday, stated that freedom of assembly would not necessarily disrupt peace or lead to public disorder.

-- BERNAMA

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