

30/06/2001

`Varsity students busy with other activities'

Farush Khan; Noor Adzman Baharuddin

BUKIT MERTAJAM, Fri. - Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today said the Government may review the allocation of places for students in public universities in the light of what is referred to as growing militant acts among students.

"We must ascertain this first, but it looks like there is a trend towards this (militant acts)," he said.

"It is as if they go to universities not to study, but to participate in activities not related to their studies."

The Prime Minister was speaking at a Press conference at Politeknik Seberang Perai here, at the end of his two-day official visit to Penang.

He was asked on whether there were tendencies towards militancy among public university students, considering there were a number of untoward incidents at Universiti Malaya.

They included students participating in (anti-government) demonstrations and the publication of (anti-Government) magazines.

The latest incident was the fire at the Dewan Tunku Canselor where Dr Mahathir is scheduled to attend a symposium on Sunday.

The Prime Minister was also asked on the possibility of certain quarters using the university to encourage the students towards militancy.

Dr Mahathir said it appeared that there was such a tendency.

"It is as if they go to university not to study, but to take part in activities not related to their studies.

"If we find this to be true, we need to review the allocation of places in the public universities."

He said the Government did not want to make wild allegations and needed to investigate first.

"We do not want to blame anybody."

Dr Mahathir, however, said it was the responsibility of students to study.

"The Government spends 10 times more than the fees paid by the students. Most of the Malay students get scholarships.

"So, if they are not interested to study, there is no point in keeping them. We may as well give their places to others."

Asked on the call by Puteri Umno to UM vice-chancellor Prof Datuk Anuar Zaini Md Zain to resign, Dr Mahathir said: "Whether the VC is wrong or not... we cannot make accusations indiscriminately..."