

17/05/2001

PM: Weed out elements poisoning minds of students

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MALACCA, Wed. - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad wants teachers to weed out undesirable elements which are creeping into schools and educational institutions.

He said these elements were poisoning the minds of students to go against the Government and they were the result of negative influences absorbed by some teachers.

"They (some teachers) ignore the national agenda as they have been influenced by other agenda," he said in his speech at the National Teachers Day celebration held at the Banquet Hall of the Seri Negeri complex in Ayer Keroh.

This year's theme is "Uplifting the teaching profession is a joint responsibility".

Dr Mahathir said the actions of some teachers were influenced by accusations that the Government was "not perfect" and, to some Muslim teachers, the Government was "un-Islamic".

He made it clear that under a parliamentary democratic administration, the Government staff must be professional and carry out all directives and policies without abusing their positions.

"If its machinery is not professional, any Government will fail and the country cannot be run properly."

He said any Government elected under such a situation would also face similar problems as it would not be getting undivided loyalty from the administrative machinery.

"Those who become victims will be the people and the country. Teachers will also suffer the consequences as they are also part of the society."

Dr Mahathir said while the Government staff could choose to differ in their political views, they must not allow their disagreement to influence the responsibilities entrusted in them.

Government servants, he explained, must implement all directives and policies of a new Government if the people decided to change the Government.

"By doing this, although the Government and policies are changed, the administrators as well as teachers can continue to contribute effectively to the country's administration."

Dr Mahathir reiterated that the allegations that the present Government was unIslamic and did not give priority to religious teaching were baseless.

"All subjects being taught in schools and universities are inter-related and necessary. In fact, they are demanded by the religion."

He said it was also a fact that the Muslims had been easily oppressed and killed by their enemies because they neglected their responsibility to seek knowledge. "The allegations that the Government is giving too much priority to worldly matters are baseless and therefore should be rejected by all parties."

He described those who rejected this world on the grounds that the Muslims could not live "in perfection" and unable to carry out the religious obligation as "traitors of Islam and the Muslims".

The Prime Minister urged teachers to give attention to these issues and act accordingly so that they could contribute towards the development of the people and the nation.

He also called on the people to help the teachers in their efforts in

nation-building and not use them as tools for certain interests.

Dr Mahathir said one of the Government's efforts to improve the image and performances of the teaching profession was through the establishment of the "Functional Intellectual Community" programme.

Under this programme, the teachers and Education Ministry staff are provided with educational opportunities to take post-graduate courses.

This is to enable them to gain more knowledge so that they can contribute effectively to the betterment of the people and the country.

He said such programmes would be weakened if the country was faced with various threats from Western neo-colonialism and the influences of the borderless world.

Dr Mahathir also spoke on the need for a new workforce - knowledge workers - who used their knowledge to perform the basic jobs without relying solely on skills alone.

"Information gained from our jobs will give us the opportunity to improve our performance, resulting in better outcome in terms of quality and lower cost."

He said computer knowledge, for example, would help accelerate data processing, making the results accurate.

Dr Mahathir said to produce knowledge workers who are computer literate, the teachers must first be prepared to learn this skill.

"Teachers must be prepared to receive continuous training so that they can have up-to-date information on the ever changing new technologies.

"Teachers who are prepared to face the challenge (of equipping themselves with new technologies) can look forward to good returns," he said.

Dr Mahathir wanted the teachers to become a motivating factor in helping to instil good reading habits among the people.

This, he said, was important as access to information was now facilitated with the advent of the Internet.

In a globalised world, he said, a nation would be weak if the people were not knowledgeable and this would lead to the country being colonised once again.