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Mahathir-Universities

REGULATIONS WILL BE STRICTLY ENFORCED IN UNIVERSITIES, SAYS PM

PUTRAJAYA, July 14 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today the government will be stricter in enforcing regulations in universities to ensure that students concentrate on their studies instead of turning campuses into centres for activities unrelated to their studies.

He said that students found using the facilities provided in universities for such activities would face expulsion.

"Public funds should not be wasted, spending on those who do not utilise them as they should be," he said at the third pre-Budget 2002 session here.

Dr Mahathir said that the government felt it should be strict in this matter even though there would be protests by certain quarters.

Speaking at a media conference later, Dr Mahathir said the government would make a study as to whether or not to amend the University and University Colleges Act and other regulations to ensure that students concentrate on their studies and not on other matters.

"We will study the University and University Colleges Act and other regulations, maybe to amend them, maybe not. If we only need to make adjustments to the regulations and that's adequate, we need not have to make any amendments.

"What is important is we want to make sure that public funds are used to provide education so that we could give the younger generation a headstart," he said.

In his speech at the dialogue, Dr Mahathir reiterated that students should not stage street demonstrations or have other objectives other than their basic objective to pursue education.

He said that students should seize the opportunity to equip themselves to become the pillars of the workforce which was progressive and innovative as aspired by the government when it set up more universities and institutions of higher learning besides providing scholarships to those who were in need.

"If the opportunities provided by the government are not fully taken advantage of, the country will lag behind because our workforce will eventually not be able to compete with workers of other countries striving to seize opportunities in the new economy," he said.

Dr Mahathir said that students should be disciplined and fully focused on their studies as they would be the human resources to assist the country in its continued development.

He said that highly skilled and knowledgeable workforce was very much needed by the country to support the development of a knowledge-based economy.

The prime minister also said that the government was striving to further enhance the participation of women in the job market to enable them to also contribute towards nation-building.

Measures to be taken would include encouraging employers to set up creches at workplaces, adopting flexitime and teleworking and offering employment on part-time and job-sharing basis, he said.

According to him, the rate of participation of women in the job market was only 44.5 per cent last year compared to 85.3 per cent of participation by men even though women accounted for half of the country's working age population.

The government had also set up a special ministry to deal with women's affairs to further upgrade women's contribution and role in nation-building, he said.

Dr Mahathir also said that non-governmental organisations (NGOs) were vital and need to have their presence felt in the Malaysian society as they could assist the government improve the effectiveness of its programmes.

However, he said, the country does not need NGOs which have a negative attitude and constantly finding faults as they not only were not much help to the government, they were also spokesman of foreign groups tarnishing the image of the government.

"In the end, the actions of the NGOs have succeeded in scaring away foreign and local investors and eventually affect the efforts of the government to improve the living standard of the people," he said.

The prime minister also called on society and private firms to adopt volunteerism towards self-help in efforts to improve the quality of life of the people.

Dr Mahathir said that the government, sensitive over the plight of those who were unfortunate, had provided assistance through special programmes to enable them to take part in economic activities.

The latest technology resulting in the invention of equipment including user-friendly computers had created more opportunities for them to take active part in the development of the country, he added.

-- BERNAMA

AFY SHO MAM RM