

15/07/2001

## Study on amending varsity Act

Roziana Hamsawi

PUTRAJAYA, Sat. - A study will be carried out to determine whether it is necessary to amend the University and University Colleges Act to deter students from engaging in outside activities not related to their studies.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said any amendment would only take place if efforts to impose stricter rules and regulations at universities proved insufficient.

"We will study first if there is a need to amend the Act. If there is no need, we will not do it," he told reporters today after chairing the third session of the 2002 pre-Budget dialogue.

Dr Mahathir said such action was needed as the Government wanted to ensure that public funds allocated for education were not misused.

"The funds for education are meant to give this young generation a head start and should not be misused for other reasons," he said.

Earlier in his opening speech, Dr Mahathir said the Government would draw up stricter rules at universities to discourage students from engaging "in outside activities not related at all to their studies".

He stressed that students found using the universities' facilities for such activities would face expulsion.

The Government, said Dr Mahathir, felt it had to be firm even though protests from certain quarters were anticipated.

"Public funds should not be wasted on those who do not utilise them."

He also said students should not stage street demonstrations or pursue objectives other than education.

He said students should seize the opportunity to equip themselves to become the pillars of a progressive and innovative workforce as the Government intended them to be when it set up more universities and institutions of higher learning, besides providing scholarships to those who were in need.

Touching on the recent rape and murder cases, Dr Mahathir said they had become more alarming of late, an indication that some in the community were easily influenced by negative values which could ruin one's morality and humanity.

"A son killing the parents, fathers killing their babies, schoolchildren and babies raped, molested... these were unheard of in the old days," he lamented.

He called on society to work together in the effort to eradicate such social ills.

Dr Mahathir also commented on the availability of pornographic materials to schoolchildren who regard sex as "something of a mystery and must be tried".

When asked to comment on the findings of the cause of Universiti Malaya's Dewan Tunku Canselor fire, Dr Mahathir said he had received reports from the Fire and Rescue Department, police and Chemistry Department.

"I have gone through them and the results are not conclusive. There is no consensus on the real cause of the fire although there are signs pointing to a wiring problem. But this is not very clear yet."

He added that arson could not be dismissed just yet.