

Puteri Umno seeks tougher punishment for sex offenders

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By Zubaidah Abu Bakar
and Chok Suat Ling
news@nstp.com.my

BANGI, Sun. ... Puteri Umno today submitted a memorandum to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad calling for harsher punishment for sex offenders.

Dr Mahathir who accepted the memorandum said he supported the calls for harsher penalties for those who committed incest and sexual crimes.

In this regard, he stressed the importance of education in cultivating values and self-discipline.

He also said that women were in the best position to carry out the task of cultivating values.

He cited as examples the need to cultivate the sense of shame for committing wrongdoings and a strong self-restraint against greed and lust.

Citing a case of three men charged with cheating Tabung Haji, he said only one shielded his face when brought to court while the others were laughing.

"They were not ashamed despite being handcuffed and charged with cheating," he added.

Dr Mahathir said if a person was not capable of feeling ashamed, he would not be able to control himself when overcome by lust.

He said if he had his way, he would like to haul these people up before the public and whip them.

Using the Japanese as an example of people who were capable of feeling ashamed of their actions, he said they were even willing to commit suicide or *hara kiri* when they failed in their task.

However, he stressed that he was not advocating suicide for those who failed in their studies.

'Malays should not be too dependent on Government'

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The memorandum was handed to Dr Mahathir by Puteri Umno Legal Bureau chairman Wan Azliana Wan Adnan at the end of the five-day "Kursus Perdana" for Puteri members at Universiti Tenaga Nasional here.

The movement has also printed pamphlets explaining the issue as part of its campaign to create public awareness.

Included in the pamphlets are telephone numbers of authorities to whom victims of sex crimes can report their cases.

Earlier, Dr Mahathir also touched on Puteri Umno's role in continuing the struggles of Umno.

He said the Malays should stop being too dependent on the Government and strive to improve themselves so that they could be at par with the other races in all fields.

Dr Mahathir later engaged in a dialogue with participants. He was asked a variety of questions, ranging from those pertaining to his family, how he handled all the unsavoury names being hurled against him by the Opposition and how he felt about students who received government scholarships but chose to be anti-Government.

His answer as to how he handled being called names by the Opposition was: "Be thick-skinned.

"If you want to be in politics, you have to be thick-skinned. They may call me *maha zalim* (cruel) and a *firaun* (pharaoh), but the important thing is that I know I am not *zalim* and I am far from being a *firaun*."

He said it was those who called him names who were bad because they hurled baseless accusations.

On allegations questioning the credibility of Puteri Umno pro-tern chief Azalina Othman Said as a leader, Dr Mahathir said if there were such accusations, one should attack and fight back.

"Don't try and defend yourself because then attention will be drawn to you. You must at-

tack. 'As Napoleon said, attacking is the best form of defence.'

He was also asked about his recent Al-Jazeera interview and how he handled the personal questions, especially that of his family.

Dr Mahathir said the Arabs were actually very polite, but the problem was when they tried to act like "white people".

"In an interview, we win some and lose some. It depends on who the viewers want to believe.

"Recently, the *Financial Times* claimed I am a director of Lotus but it was actually my son Mokhzani. They also said my son Mirzan received RM900,000 because he is a director of nine companies."

He said it was true that Mirzan was a director, but it was ridiculous that he was paid so much.

"If he is paid so much, the companies will be bankrupt.

"All these allegations have not lessened the people's support for me. I am not afraid. In fact the support for Umno now is stronger than before."

He also expressed confidence in Puteri Umno's role in the coming general election, especially in helping to attract voters in Kelantan and Terengganu.

Dr Mahathir also said he was disappointed with students who chose to go against the Government, despite all that have been done for them.

Other questions Dr Mahathir fielded were those relating to globalisation, former Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, the use of the word "Islam" in the names of political parties, and Malaysia's stand in the Singapore land reclamation issue.

More than 500 Puteri Umno members nationwide attended the course aimed at creating political awareness.

Among the Umno leaders who spoke during the course were party vice-presidents Datuk Seri Najib Abdul Razak, Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin and Tan Sri Muhammad Muhammadd Taib.

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