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Mahathir-Education

CHANGES TO EDUCATION SYSTEM ARE "FAILURE CORRECTIONS"

By: Ahmad Fuad Yahya

PETALING JAYA, Oct 10 (Bernama) -- Changes to the Malaysian education system are "failure corrections" to avoid further failures in future, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

The Prime Minister said he personally disliked to make these changes but they were unavoidable.

"If we leave it like that then we will fail again," he said during a dialogue session at the "Learning From Korea" seminar at the Sunway Convention Centre here.

A participant had asked why the Malaysian education system went through frequent changes and wanted the government to be more firm in the education structure.

Dr Mahathir said the government was forced to make changes to an education system which did not deliver.

In Malaysia, Dr Mahathir said there were too many "non-educational inputs" which had derailed the education system.

"For example, right from the very beginning, we should have realised that English is a very important language for many subjects particularly science and maths."

"But because we were nationalistic, we decided that we should have education only in Bahasa Malaysia in the hope that the English schools, when they are converted to national schools, will attract multiracial students to the system," he said.

Unfortunately the goal could not be achieved because some people thought that they should use the national school system for the advancement of one race and therefore stressed on making it into a Malay school system, he said.

At the same time, the people who had made the national school a Malay school system also lost faith in the system and many Malays preferred to send their children to Islamic religious schools.

"This of course needs to be corrected. That is why we have to come up with ideas like Sekolah Wawasan and the like," he said.

To a question on the role of the media in nation-building, the Prime Minister said, "they can play a terrific role provided they are balanced and fair."

They should expose what was wrong and at the same time must also appreciate what was right, he said.

Dr Mahathir said the media could stimulate the economy and the people into doing all the right things, however they sometimes tended to focus on controversial issues because they wanted to sell their magazines or their advertisement space.

"When they become self-centred they are no better than the people they criticise."

"We need people to be rational and fair in order to ensure the success of our country," he said.

The Prime Minister said the Malaysian media would be as bad as that in many other countries if they played the role to disrupt and unbalance society.

-- BERNAMA

AFY AHH AAM