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Mahathir-Students

DR MAHATHIR WARNS STUDENTS NOT TO NEGLECT STUDIES

By: Zaharah Othman

LONDON, Feb 25 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad Sunday issued a strong warning to students who neglect their studies to meddle in politics.

"If you are in the universities and you feel that that gives you the stature to influence the people in the kampungs, then I think you are wasting public funds. The choice is to leave university and join full time politics or stay in university and study. That is why we have the Universities and University Colleges Act," he said.

The prime minister, who was speaking to over 600 Malaysian students at the Imperial College, said students could certainly get themselves involved in intellectual discussions and discussions on developments in the country and even politics.

The issue was raised when one of the students, during the question-and-answer session, asked the prime minister about the Universities and University Colleges Act.

Dr Mahathir had earlier told his audience that the future depended on them.

"Each and everyone of us has the means, the ability, the power to contribute towards the development of our country, towards its continued independence, towards its growing role in international affairs, so that Malaysia will become a great country in the future where people will obviously be respected by people of the rest of the world.

"That's our objective. We have been able to achieve a little bit of that but much will depend on the future generation," he said.

The prime minister, who is on his second day in London, spoke for nearly an hour to the students, most of whom are doing engineering. In a very jovial mood, the prime minister evoked laughter from his audience with his witty replies and comments.

Dr Mahathir was accompanied by his wife, Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Ali, and the High Commissioner of Malaysia in London, Datuk Haji Salim Hashim, to the Great Hall of the College, where he was given a rousing welcome and a standing ovation.

Looking relaxed, he entertained all the questions from the students, which ranged from the problem of brain drain to the definition of citizenship.

Replying to a question about the Good Conduct Pledge by government servants and students of public universities, Dr Mahathir said, "We want a truly professional government service. The pledge will ensure that people become responsible and must produce the amount of work that they are paid for."

The prime minister voiced his concern that people do not seem to respect independence anymore. He spoke about the global village in which everyone has the right to interfere in other people's affairs.

"They are interested in everything that we do and they are not going to allow us to do what we like, even if we can show that our way of doing things is much better than their way of doing things. In other words, people do not respect independence any more," he said.

He said this happened because countries could no longer live in isolation.

"Whether we like it or not, we are part of this world."

He said that the rights of some people to interfere in the affairs of

other countries meant that if countries did not conform to what those countries considered to be right, they would apply pressure by applying sanctions and making threats not to invest or to buy their products.

Dr Mahathir said countries, which had had to borrow to overcome their financial crisis, had lost their independence.

"It is for this reason that it is important for us to retain our independence," he said.

The prime minister is expected to meet British Prime Minister Tony Blair Monday before visiting the House of Lords.

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