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Mahathir-Students

MAHATHIR PROPOSES INTER-RACIAL CLUB TO FOSTER TIES AMONG STUDENTS

KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 13 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr mahathri Mohamad today called for pro-active efforts to foster ties among university students of various races to prevent the existence of an adult Malaysian society with racial attitude, which is becoming obvious.

The prime minister proposed that every university set up inter-racial clubs to conduct activities like social and sports activities, educational outings within and outside the country and picnics.

They could also conduct courses on the customs, taboos and sensitivities of the respective races.

He said the participants must work deliberately and consciously to avoid disputes and quarrels, especially over racial differences.

"The government will give incentives and prizes to clubs that succeed in getting members of all races and also in coming out with ways to further foster ties among them," he said when launching Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman, here.

"The university students are now keeping to their own races, they don't live together in the same dormitory or room.

"They sit apart in the lecture theatres, in the playing fields, and during co-curricular activities.

"This is an unhealthy situation and is dangerous to the country's future. The reality is that when they leave the university to work, they will meet a multiracial society that is different from the society in the university," he said.

Dr Mahathir said that although Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman (Utar) was a private university, that is, an educational institution that normally does not have many bumiputera students, efforts must be made to attract as many bumiputera students as possible.

At the same time, he did not want to see universities in Malaysia becoming "certificate mills" that serve only as conduits for knowledge from outside.

He said the universities should contribute towards reducing the supremacy of western thinkers in the various fields, including political science, by cultivating original thinking from among the locals.

"The time has come for us to question the western thinking which now lords over the world until anyone who questions it is regarded as a heretic or being out of line," he said.

Dr Mahathir also expressed the hope that the local universities would achieve a high level of knowledge and research to become renowned in the world as centres of excellence like Oxford University in Britain, Harvard University in the United States and Waseda University in Japan.

Dr Mahathir's speech also touched on the importance of command of English in the pursuit of knowledge, especially in Science, Mathematics and technology.

He said English must be used as a medium of instruction from the start until university level.

"Moreover, universities in Malaysia must be open to all races and the national language and English should be the media of instruction right from school.

"If the languages of the races are used exclusively in Science and Mathematics, their universities will be closed to other races and this is unhealthy for a multiracial nation like Malaysia," he said.

Dr Mahathir said that just because a person could speak in other languages and use the names of other languages, it did would not change the race or his identification with the race.

He said that factions demanding that the identity of their race not be sullied would only lead to other factions making the same demands.

"When all the parties remain stubborn and set aside the interests of the country, the unity and harmony that we have nurtured all this while will be destroyed," he said.

Utar, the brainchild of the MCA, is building its campus next to the Tunku Abdul Rahman College in Setapak. It is scheduled for completion by the middle of next year.

The complex, which is reported to cost between RM500 million and RM1 billion, will have, among others, a seven-storey building, four lecture halls, 16 lecture rooms, a library and a resource centre and information technology laboratory.

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