

17/01/2002

`No truth to name reversion'

Ramlan Said

SERDANG, Wed. - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has dismissed rumours that Universiti Putra Malaysia will revert to its former name.

"There are no plans for the university to be known again as Universiti Pertanian Malaysia," he said to thunderous applause from UPM staff and undergraduates at a campus gathering today.

The matter was raised by UPM vice-chancellor Prof Datuk Mohd Zohadie Bardaie who expressed hope that there was no truth to the proposed name change.

The university was renamed Universiti Putra Malaysia in 1997, with the announcement made by Dr Mahathir himself during a visit there.

At today's gathering, which was attended by more than 5,000 undergraduates, the Prime Minister witnessed a pledge by the students who signed a good conduct (akujanji) agreement.

Dr Mahathir also witnessed the awarding of the ISO 9001 certificate to the Engineering Faculty.

In his speech, Dr Mahathir advised undergraduates to leave their involvement in other matters, such as politics, until later.

As students, he said, their main responsibility was to study hard and attain excellence results.

"All of you are still young. There is plenty of time to pursue your other interests later. It is better to equip yourself with the necessary knowledge and skills first.

"When this is achieved, your involvement in the other fields will be more meaningful and beneficial."

Dr Mahathir said as students would later inherit the responsibility of running the country, it was paramount that they be well-equipped for the task.

"Surely we do not want the country to be led by mediocre leaders. If the next generation does not possess the capabilities, then it will be impossible for the country to continue to develop and progress."

Dr Mahathir said the progress achieved so far was through the country's own efforts.

He said Malaysia was not dependant on foreign aid as it had devised its own ways to succeed.

Later, at a Press conference, Dr Mahathir said he was not dismissing the possibility of him meeting United States President George W. Bush on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum in New York, which both leaders are expected to attend on Feb 1. "Well, I suppose if I meet him, I meet him lah.

"He is going to the same place ... he will be at the same conference also."

Asked if Malaysia was concerned over the trade agreement signed between Japan and Singapore during the visit of the Japanese Prime Minister to the republic recently, Dr Mahathir said Singapore had been told that any agreements it entered into with other countries must not violate conditions under the Asean Free Trade Area.

The Prime Minister also took questions on a report that militants arrested in Singapore had attended training sessions in Malaysia.

Dr Mahathir said the matter was being investigated, but at the moment there was not enough information to enable the local authorities to locate

the training camps.

"Sometimes people, after being arrested, make statements that are not really true."

On whether Malaysia had neutralised the threats from Islamic militants following the arrest of members of Kumpulan Militan Malaysia, Dr Mahathir said the Government was capable of dealing with the matter as it had the experience.

On whether anything had been uncovered to link KMM with al-Qaeda and the Sept 11 attacks in the US, Dr Mahathir said he was informed that the KMM members were trained by the Taliban and al-Qaeda in Afghanistan.

"I don't know of any link (unless) we consider training in the same place as the link."
ramlans@nstp.com.my

(END)