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Come home, PM urges professionals

Ashraf Abdullah

PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad urged Malaysian students abroad to return to Malaysia upon completion of their studies to help the nation achieve developed status by 2020.

Speaking at a meeting after dinner with the Malaysian community at Rumah Malaysia here on Friday night, the Prime Minister said Malaysia was on the right track to achieve Vision 2020, but needed the help of young professionals.

To a question from the floor on what Malaysia had to offer to attract Malaysian professionals working abroad, Dr Mahathir said besides the warm and cosy weather in Malaysia, professionals received very high salaries.

"I was trying to engage a person to run a very important government agency and was willing to pay RM1 million a year, but a bank offered him RM1.5 million. This is a lot, compared with what I am getting.

"I am not only Prime Minister, but I also had to take over as Finance Minister. This stingy Government of ours is paying me only RM16,000 a month - to do two jobs," he said to laughter from the audience.

The Prime Minister, who was here for the conference on the Reconstructing of Lebanon which is also known as Paris Conference II, touched on national service as well.

Dr Mahathir said the reason to introduce National Service it was to bring the various races together for at least six months.

"The national schools have failed to bring about better relations among the various races. The Chinese and Indians deserted national schools because they felt the schools were becoming more and more Islamic."

He hoped that National Service would create citizens who are less chauvinistic in their relationship with other ethnic groups.

"We want the Malays, Chinese and Indians to live together, work together and play together. That will be good for Malaysia.

After the dinner, Dr Mahathir and wife Datuk Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali spent almost an hour signing autographs.