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Mahathir-Students

MALAYSIA TO LOOK FOR ALTERNATIVES FOR STUDENTS DENIED ENTRY INTO US

SHAH ALAM, Sept 17 (Bernama) -- Malaysia will look at alternative institutions of higher learning for its students who have been denied entry into the US by the superpower's new immigration policy, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

"Of course we have to find ways of making them (the students) continue with their education. It is very unfortunate, because they are not terrorists," the prime minister told a news conference after opening a national seminar in "Understanding Islam as an Islamic Country", here.

Yesterday, Deputy Education Minister Datuk Abdul Aziz Samsuddin revealed that more than 150 Malaysian students, mostly Muslims, were in a quandary after the US, acting on orders from Washington, denied them entry to continue their studies at universities there.

Abdul Aziz had said that the students were left in a lurch as most of them were in their third or final year of completing their courses.

Asked about the right of these students to continue their education, Dr Mahathir said the denial of entry is the right of a country and this could not be disputed.

"Well, it is their country. I suppose they have a right...we also have the right to prevent people, undesirables, from coming into our country," he said.

On the blanket ruling by the US to deny entry to Malaysian who are Muslims, Dr Mahathir said it was the decision of the US and it should not be questioned.

"That is their decision...their country. I have no questions but don't come and interfere in the administration of our country," he said.

Asked if Malaysia would send a protest note to the US on the matter, the prime minister said he would bring the matter up in the cabinet "but usually we don't protest".

On another note, Dr Mahathir said the United Nations (UN) should lift some sanctions against Iraq now that the impoverished nation had agreed to let UN weapons inspectors into the country.

"(The) sanctions are not hurting (Iraq president) Saddam Hussein but hurting a lot of poor people, old people, little children, pregnant mothers... these are the people who are paying the price and to say that Saddam Hussein is a very cruel man, even if he does not care for his people, you are not doing any good for these people by punishing them for something they are not responsible for," he said.

On terrorism, Dr Mahathir said Malaysia would continue to arrest those linked with terrorist networks if they were identified.

He said the world had realised the root causes of terrorism and now it had to think how these causes could be dealt with.

"We know the root causes (of terrorism), now it is how to deal with them. If we keep on having debates, it will go on forever. We will do what we have to do to eradicate terrorism," he said.

-- BERNAMA

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