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Mahathir-Students

DO NOT WASTE COUNTRY'S MONEY- DR M TO STUDENTS

CYBERJAYA, Sept 6 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today university students who do not concentrate on their studies but busy themselves with politics are only wasting the country's money which instead can be used for the development of the rural society.

The Prime Minister said they could be involved in the university's internal politics but should not allow themselves to be poisoned by the politics-of-hatred propagated by certain political parties.

"We find that there are students who give priority to off campus politics. They do not study. When there is political campaigning, they go out and campaign, are willing to tell lies, cheat and slander. This is very regrettable.

"The government has provided them with various facilities but there are people who teach them not to be thankful, not to be grateful. This is despicable teaching which can cause chaos in society," he told reporters after a meeting with members of the Multimedia Super Corridor Advisory Panel here.

Dr Mahathir said this when asked to comment on news reports that pro-opposition candidates had won in the campus elections at Universiti Malaya and the International Islamic University of Malaysia for the 2003/2004 period.

Realising the importance of education in the country's development, the Prime Minister said the government had willingly allocated the most amount of money to the education sector and the bulk of it went to financing public universities.

"The Government subsidy is very large indeed. Hence if they do not focus on their studies, they are only wasting the country's money."

He said they should not waste public funds collected from the hard-earned money of others.

Dr Mahathir said after acquiring knowledge and when earning money on their own, if they then get involved in politics then the cost would be borne by themselves.

"Now they are involved in politics but the cost of this is borne by others," he said.

The Prime Minister said he would be thankful if university students lived up to their responsibility to gain knowledge.

Asked about students being labelled as pro-government and pro-opposition, Dr Mahathir said the pro-government ones were responsible students who did not want their education in the campus to be disrupted.

He said students said to be anti-government were those who had been incited by certain political parties.

Dr Mahathir nevertheless said it was odd as to why some students hated the government.

"What wrong did the government do to them? We give them scholarship, we give them university, we help them, to the poor we lend money. We do everything for them. There is no reason for them to hate the government," he said.

Replying to a question, Dr Mahathir said if the people were not disturbed by groups that were willing to slander and lie, then they would all support the government.

Malaysians generally supported the government because they realised they were fortunate in living in a peaceful and prosperous country, he

said.

Dr Mahathir also commented on reports that students' achievement in school level science and mathematics examinations had gone up since English was introduced in the teaching of the two subjects early this year.

He said this was expected because the policy was aimed at enhancing the capacity of students in absorbing knowledge.

"I think it is natural because when you have to keep on translating, thinking in two languages, then you'll find your capacity to absorb knowledge is much less," he said.

He said learning both subjects in English also decreased the amount of confusion, citing the example of the English word "potassium" which was translated as "kalium" in Malay.

"What we want to do is to absorb knowledge but if in between we have to keep on translating information, then the process becomes slow. So I am not surprised at all that they do better," he said.

When asked whether the government would pursue all out, the teaching of Science and Mathematics in English, Dr Mahathir said:

"Yes. We want everybody to have some knowledge of Science and Mathematics because even if they want to be an artist for example, there comes a time when they have to do something about how to use a computer," he said.

He added that knowledge of the two subjects was very important for a community that wanted to make progress.

On his one-to-one meetings with the MSC panellists today, Dr Mahathir said they were useful because all sorts of ideas were thrown about to bring further progress to the project which entails the development of a 750 sq km hub for multimedia products and services.

"Some proposed that a university dedicated to information technology and leadership training be set up with possible direct cooperation of certain companies," he said.

Among those who met the Prime Minister were Silicon Graphics Inc Chairman and Chief Executive Officer Bob Bishop, Cutler&Company Managing Director Dr Terry Cutler, Microsoft's Chief Technical Officer Craig Mundie and Dr John Gage who is Sun Microsystems' Chief Researcher and Science Director.

They were here for the just-concluded seventh meeting of the MSC Advisory Panel.

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