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PM throws a dare to male students

Sujatani Poosparajah

SHAH ALAM, Tues. - Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad tonight threw a challenge to male students, especially Bumiputeras, to enter university and master knowledge as they were outnumbered by their female counterparts.

Speaking before more than 15,000 students at Universiti Teknologi Mara (UiTM) in Shah Alam in conjunction with its Merdeka festival and the ground-breaking ceremony for its Shah Alam Campus 2 in Puncak Alam, the Prime Minister said he still could not accept why institutions of higher learning comprised almost 70 per cent female students.

"There are not many male students entering universities. We want a 50-50 female and male student population. This does not mean a decrease of female students, but rather an increase of male students." He said he was impressed with the capabilities and achievements of women today in engineering and economics.

He said students must aim to achieve the highest level of excellence in their studies and not merely enter university for the sake of obtaining qualification and wear a robe to impress people.

"We have to prove that the 26 per cent of the budget the Government spends on education is not wasted. Some countries spend 20 to 25 per cent on defence.

"The facilities are there but our attitude towards attaining knowledge is also important. We can bring the horse to the water but we can't force it to drink if it does not want to."

He said the private sector also spent no less when compared with the Government on education, citing institutions of higher learning set up by Petronas, Tenaga Nasional and Telekom as examples.

He also urged Malay students to focus on using the opportunity given to them by the Government to excel.

"We planned that in 20 years we would be able to give Malays and other Bumiputeras 30 per cent of the nation's economic wealth. It is now 33 years since the New Economic Policy was launched, and we have achieved only 19 per cent.

"The Government has provided scholarships, set up universities and provided many other facilities but many who were given opportunities did not study.

"I hope that come Independence Day, we will all pledge to focus our time and energy on education and master knowledge not merely for our interests but to contribute towards our country and nation."

He also declared tomorrow a holiday for UiTM students.