

Stay on for good reasons, PM tells students

NST - 18/5/2006

IT is all right for Malaysian students overseas to remain behind after completing their studies to gain working experience or to go for further education.

This was because they would eventually return to serve the people, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

He said it was unfair to accuse students who remained overseas as unpatriotic because they had reasons for doing it.

"They will eventually come back. It's only that we will get their services a bit later," he told a group of Malaysian medical students studying at Bali's Universitas Udayana during a dialogue session here yesterday.

He said he understood the situation after Malaysian students in Ireland explained it following

Higher Education Minister Datuk Mustapa Mohamed's advice to them on May 2 that students must have a strong sense of nationalism.

During a meeting with Malaysian students, Mustapa reminded them that they should return home after their studies because making money in foreign countries should not be their priority. Malaysian student groups in UK responded that work experience, exposure to the latest technology and access to the European market were among the pull factors for them to stay on.

They also explained that money constituted only 30 per cent of the factor, as many of them remained overseas to gain more experience with the hope of returning home as among the best professionals.

Abdullah said the students were being reasonable.

"Some of them want to become medical specialists," he said.

He added that he was not worried because the number of graduates who remained overseas was small.

"Most of them have returned. This is not a loss to us. Let's hope that those who study overseas do not fail in their studies.

"For those who want to gain experience after their studies, or who want to become specialists before they return home, it is all right for them to do it," he said.

Abdullah also said there was a small number of students who had failed in their studies and were too embarrassed to return home.

He added that some of these students had to work there to get some money to continue their studies, adding that the most im-

portant thing was for students to excel in their studies.

"To fail is to disappoint all of us. The Government, as sponsors, will also be disappointed."

In his speech, Abdullah advised Malaysian students overseas to strive to become excellent students, acquiring the best skills and knowledge, practising a healthy lifestyle and possessing high moral standards.

He said morality was important because knowledgeable people had been known to be thieves and criminals, being only concerned with their own interests.

Abdullah said honest, disciplined and responsible people would be the country's best human capital to ensure its aim of becoming a developed nation by 2020.