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'Keep 25pc budget allocation for education'

*Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad being **welcomed by students** when he arrived for the launch of the **28th anniversary celebrations of Universiti Utara Malaysia** in Sintok, Kedah, yesterday. At left is **UUM vice-chancellor** Professor Datuk Dr Mohamed Mustafa Ishak.* Pic by Rahmat Othman

SINTOK: The government should continue to allocate 25 per cent of the annual budget towards the education sector.

Former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad said yesterday such allocations should be continued as they had played a major role in upgrading the capacity of Malaysians to provide trained human capital.

Speaking after the launch of the 28th anniversary celebrations of Universiti Utara Malaysia, he said the 25 per cent of allocation in the country's budget had always been the government's target for the education sector.

The 2012 Budget tabled by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak had allocated some RM50.2 billion to the sector.

Earlier, Dr Mahathir said the government, under the administration of Najib and during his 22-year tenure as prime minister, had carried on spending a large sum on education so that they could continue to produce and develop talented, creative, innovative, educated and knowledgeable Malaysians.

"This is an investment for the future as we believe the new generation of educated Malaysians can learn how to manage the country's income and expenditure intelligently and, at the same time, can develop the nation rapidly.

"We are not wrong to think that way. Many can see the changes taking place in the development of the country and the education system now compared with the times before independence.

"Today, we have Malaysians who are capable of holding important posts in an organisation and also decision-makers in huge organisations compared with the times when colonialists thought that no Malaysian was capable of holding such positions due to the lack of education.

"We also see Malaysians, let it be in the rural areas or in towns, having a better lifestyle, all thanks to the knowledge they gained through the education they obtained."

Dr Mahathir also urged university students to diversify their knowledge and not stick just to one field as the nation today demands such multi-talented graduates.

He suggested that students take up management courses in addition to the courses they had enrolled in.

"This is necessary as we see a lot happening in other countries due to lack of management skills. We also see countries going bankrupt because of that."

During the question-and-answer session after his speech, Dr Mahathir was asked his views on the planned public listing of Felda Global Venture Holdings (FGVH).

He said the public should know how to evaluate and see if the decision carried out was beneficial or not. "In this case, I personally think it will benefit the Felda settlers. No one can say the Felda scheme is a failure."