

Barisan members get orders to check trend Racial issues: Stop it — Dr M

By FAEZAH ISMAIL

KUALA LUMPUR, Sun. — Stem the tide of chauvinism, racialism and extremism or face the consequences. NST 25 MAR 1985

And the order is out to every component party of the Barisan Nasional — there are 11 of them — to beat down the ugly head of these "isms."

(Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today if steps are not taken to stop this trend, efforts at promoting racial integration will be seriously undermined.)

He told newsmen after a Barisan Nasional Supreme Council meeting this morning:

"The role of the Barisan Nasional to check the trend towards this (chauvinism, racialism and extremism) has been identified and I want the component parties of the BN to play a more effective role.

"They should not leave it to the Government. If there is any racial and religious problem it should be settled through negotiation and not by counter statements.

"What is important to us is that this country is stable and that there are no racial clashes as in 1969 and that our economic growth is sus-

tained."

The Press — particularly certain newspapers — came under fire by the Prime Minister for what he described as their lack of effort in helping the Government to promote racial integration.

He blamed these newspapers for "singling out matters which are then converted into racial issues" and spread throughout the country.

"These statements would not appear racialistic, chauvinistic... if they had not been reported out of

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that issues such as Bukit China, Papan and the import of mandarin oranges had been made into racial issues.

"The Bukit China issue is a Malacca issue and should stay in Malacca. But the issue is spread by certain newspapers and the whole game is heated up and agitated until it begins to boil.

"But in Bukit China, the problem was over development. That we have resolved among ourselves."

"I know that you have to sell newspapers, but not at the expense of the nation's stability," he said.

Dr Mahathir appealed to newspapers to help the Barisan fight the trend towards communalism, chauvinism and extremism. "It is your patriotic duty."

Asked about his idea of the role of the Press and whether his statement meant that he did not welcome dissent, he replied: "Dissent there must be, otherwise society will just stagnate. But I see the role of the Press as that of helping in creating a stable society and in development.

"How can newspapers say things such as the economy is going to the dogs when we have six per cent growth? When there is no complaint, one is sought out and blown up. When there is no wrong-doing, why make something wrong?"

"The Press should do what it can for the people to have a better life and ensure stability.

"There have been articles saying that the fishermen are poor. What is the use of this? We already know the fishermen are poor? The question is, what are you doing about it?"

"The Press should help the Government in trying to get fishermen to change their way of life so that they can be brought into modern times," he said.

He added: "We face the people once every five years but you don't have to. If we had a system where editors are elected once every five years, then things may be different."

Dr Mahathir pointed out that during the time of Bank Negara Governor Tan Sri Aziz Taha's resignation and replacement by Datuk Jaffar Hussein, a foreign newspaper had made allegations implying that "I am making money illegally."

"This was done through innuendoes that I help some people. Sure, I help people solve problems. That is my job. If I cannot help people, I will be cut off and might as well leave.

"There was this innuendo that I was helping my friends make money.

"But where is the proof? If this is said here, I can take the person to court. But it is implied in an article in a foreign publication.

"What will people in the world think when they read it — that I am a corrupt Prime Minister and that Malaysia is a corrupt country. But are we really as corrupt as some of the western countries?"

He added: "An Islamic magazine even printed that we have banned a so-called Islamic party in Malaysia.

"But is there such a thing? I have my own suspicions that this magazine is funded by the Zionists."