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MAHATHIR-EDUCATION

(EMBARGO: 10.30 PM, JULY 9)

BM

KUALA LUMPUR, JULY 9 (BERNAMA) -- DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR MOHAMAD SAID TONIGHT MALAYSIA IS THE ONLY COUNTRY IN THE WORLD WHICH ACCORDED A PLACE FOR CHINESE SCHOOLS.

OTHER COUNTRIES DID NOT AT ALL ACCORD SUCH A PLACE, THE PRIME MINISTER SAID IN THE +ISU SEMASA+ (CURRENT ISSUES) PROGRAMME OVER RTM.

+THEY DO NOT AT ALL ALLOW CHINESE EDUCATION THOUGH THEY HAVE A SIZEABLE CHINESE POPULATION,+ HE ADDED.

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID AMENDMENTS TO THE EDUCATION ACT AS A WHOLE WERE FOR THE GOOD OF THE NATIONAL EDUCATION SYSTEM IN THE FUTURE, AND THEY DID NOT JEOPARDISE THE RIGHTS OF THE COMMUNITIES IN MALAYSIA.

HE SAID IT SHOULD BE REMEMBERED THAT NOT ONLY THE CHINESE COMMUNITY BUT ALSO THE MALAY COMMUNITY WAS DISSATISFIED WITH THE AMENDMENTS.

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID THE GOVERNMENT DID NOT APPROVE THE AMENDMENTS AT THE LAST SESSION OF PARLIAMENT BECAUSE IT WANTED TO GIVE ALL QUARTERS THE TIME AND OPPORTUNITY TO STUDY THE PROVISIONS IN THE AMENDMENTS.

HOWEVER, HE ADDED, IF THE GOVERNMENT WERE TO DEPEND ON THE VIEWS OF THE PEOPLE, THERE WOULD NOT BE A COMMON OPINION. THEREFORE, AT SOME STAGE, THE GOVERNMENT MUST MAKE A DECISION. -- MORE  
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IF THE MATTER WAS TO BE LEFT TO THE PEOPLE, THERE WOULD BE NO AGREEMENT AT ALL AND THE GOVERNMENT WOULD BE UNABLE TO DO ANYTHING, HE SAID, ADDING THAT +WE WILL NOT BE ABLE TO AMEND ANY LAW AT ALL, MEANING THE PROVISION WHICH IS NOT DESIRED BY THE CHINESE COMMUNITY CANNOT BE REMOVED TOO.+

ASKED ABOUT THE ANXIETY OF THE CHINESE OVER WHETHER THE NEW PROVISIONS WOULD RESTRICT THE POWERS OF THE GOVERNING BOARDS OF NATIONAL-TYPE SCHOOLS, THE PRIME MINISTER SAID THEY SHOULD NOT MISUNDERSTAND THE GOVERNMENT'S INTENTIONS BECAUSE THEIR POWERS TO MAINTAIN THE SCHOOLS AS NATIONAL-TYPE SCHOOLS WOULD REMAIN UNAFFECTED.

+IF THE GOVERNMENT HAD INTENDED TO CHANGE THE NATURE OF THE NATIONAL-TYPE SCHOOLS, IT WILL HAVE DONE SO LONG AGO BECAUSE WE HAVE THE PROVISIONS FOR THAT BUT THEN WE DID NOT DO SO,+ HE SAID.

HE SAID THIS SHOWED THAT THE GOVERNMENT DID NOT SUBSCRIBE TO THE INDISCRIMINATE USE OF ITS POWERS. FURTHERMORE, THOSE PROVISIONS WOULD BE ABOLISHED AND WHAT WOULD BE CLARIFIED WERE THE DUTIES, RESPONSIBILITIES AND ROLE OF SCHOOL BOARDS.

HE SAID THE BOARDS OF INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS, SUCH AS CHINESE SECONDARY SCHOOLS, COULD DECIDE ON THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE SCHOOLS WITHIN THE THE EDUCATION SYSTEM BECAUSE THEY WERE FUNDED BY THEMSELVES. -- MORE

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BUT IT WOULD BE PECULIAR FOR BOARDS OF NATIONAL-TYPE SCHOOLS, WHICH WERE FULLY FUNDED BY THE GOVERNMENT, TO HAVE POWERS TO DECIDE ON ALL MATTERS CONCERNING THEIR ADMINISTRATION, HE SAID.

HE SAID IT WAS FOR THIS REASON THAT THE GOVERNMENT WANTED TO SEE A STANDARDISATION OF THE BOARDS OF NATIONAL-TYPE SCHOOLS AND NATIONAL SCHOOLS. +THAT IS ALL THAT WE HAVE DETERMINED. SO, WHY SHOULD THEY BE AFRAID. THERE IS NO REASON TO,+ HE ADDED.

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID THE GOVERNMENT GAVE THE ASSURANCE THAT THE CHARACTER OF THE SCHOOLS WOULD REMAIN BUT THEIR POWERS WERE LIMITED BECAUSE THE FUNDS CAME FROM THE GOVERNMENT.

HE SAID POLITICIANS, FOR EXAMPLE, TRIED TO SEEK OUT A SUBJECT THAT COULD CAUSE ANXIETY AMONG THE PEOPLE SOLELY FOR POLITICAL REASONS.

THE PRIME MINISTER SAID THE GOVERNMENT'S RECORD SHOWED THAT IT HAD NEVER DONE ANYTHING WHICH COULD BE CONSTRUED TO MEAN IT HAD BEEN INSINCERE.

IN FACT, THERE WERE PROVISIONS WHICH EMPOWERED THE GOVERNMENT TO CHANGE THE CHARACTER OF NATIONAL-TYPE SCHOOLS BUT IT HAD NOT DONE SO.

+BUT WHY IS IT THAT AFTER WE HAVE ABOLISHED THOSE POWERS, THERE IS STILL ANXIETY? THIS IS THE PROBLEM,+ HE SAID. -- BERNAMA

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