

25 JUL 2000

Mahathir-Schools

BN AGREES ON PROPOSAL FOR VISIONARY SCHOOLS TO BOOST SOLIDARITY

KUALA LUMPUR, July 25 (Bernama) -- All the 14 Barisan Nasional (BN) component parties today agreed on and supported the establishment of Visionary Schools in an effort to strengthen relations between the various races from a young age.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the Visionary Schools would accommodate three schools of different media of instruction in one main campus using common facilities.

"This is one way of forging closer relations (between the various races) while they are still young," he said at a media conference after chairing the BN supreme council's general meeting at the Umno headquarters, here today.

He said the common facilities would be the playing field, assembly hall and the canteen.

Dr Mahathir, who is also BN chairman, said the component parties were concerned about the activities going on in the kindergartens where the feeling of hate was being sowed by certain quarters.

He said the same situation was also occurring at the school and university levels.

On cooperation between the various races at the university level, Dr Mahathir said: "It worries us because they are not interacting, student of different races."

He said the government was trying its level best to overcome the problem.

He said, among other things, the government had directed the Education Ministry to place students of various races in accommodations where they would share common facilities.

Dr Mahathir said it was crucial for the multi-racial communities to unite, close ranks and establish relations between them such as celebrating jointly the festivals of the diverse communities.

Meanwhile, BN secretary-general Tan Sri Mohamed Rahmat said the establishment of the Visionary Schools was a good move in restoring close relations between the diverse communities which had been fostered since childhood as parents were now more keen to send their children to separate kindergartens according to their racial or religious background.

"The BN is fully convinced that the move (in establishing the Visionary Schools) is capable of promoting greater mutual understanding between the people of various cultures, mutual respect and closer interaction since childhood," he said.

He said inter-racial relations had been eroded as they had been segregated from small, whereas it was most important for the people to remember that Malaysia was built on the premise of racial cooperation, developed by the people of diverse racial background and Malaysia's future also depended on racial unity.

MIC president Datuk Seri S.Samy Vellu said the proposal to create such schools had been mooted long before the Sauk incident.

Commenting on the Visionary Schools, the Works Minister said the Chinese and Tamil national type primary schools as well as the national schools which would be located at the Visionary School campus would retain their respective medium of instruction and their own administration.

He said currently 10 Visionary Schools were under construction or planning with the first one located on a 2.8-hectare site in Sitiawan.

"The idea is to make the Malaysian children to be together, to play together, to understand the culture of each other, to respect each other and to create more brotherhood among themselves," he said.

Samy Vellu said, however, the identity of each school would be retained with the government decision to allow each school to have their own building although originally the plan was to locate all the schools of the various media in one common building.

-- BERNAMA

MNY AHH AO