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Government to set up visionary schools to promote unity

Kamarul Yunus; Zety Fazilah Baharuddin

ALL the 14 components of Barisan Nasional (BN) have agreed on the setting up of visionary schools to strengthen relations among the multi-racial communities in the country.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the visionary schools would accommodate three schools of different medium of instruction in one main campus sharing common facilities such as a playing field.

"This is one of the steps to be taken to forge closer relations (among the various races) while they are still young," he told newsmen after chairing the BN supreme council's general meeting in Kuala Lumpur, yesterday.

Besides a playing field, Dr Mahathir said the common facilities would also include an assembly hall, resource centre and a canteen.

Dr Mahathir, who is also BN chairman, said the component party leadership also expressed its concern about the activities going on in the kindergartens where hatred against the Government was being sowed by certain quarters.

"The same situation is also occurring at the school and university levels," he said, referring to suggestions that certain opposition parties are using the arms heist at the military camp in Sauk, Grik on July 2 for political mileage.

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

However, he stressed that the Government was trying its level best to overcome the problem.

Dr Mahathir has also directed members of BN component parties to explain to the people the real issue on the arms heist in Sauk.

"They (component party leaders) have accepted the explanation that the Sauk incident is not about a fight between Islam and another religion because in Islam, we are not taught to oppress the non-Muslims," he said.

"For example, there is anger among Sarawakians because a member of the Iban community had been killed by a Muslim.

"We explained that this is not a matter of a Muslim attacking an Iban but rather it was a criminal act by a group which is not supported by the Government or other Muslims," he said.

To promote unity and dilute the influence of religious deviationist groups such as the Al-Ma'unah, Dr Mahathir said the BN leaders have also agreed to organise its convention annually.

He said the BN secretariat will handle the convention which is also aimed at discussing issues pertinent to the interest of BN and the nation.

Dr Mahathir also said the BN Supreme Council has postponed its decision on the application from four political parties to join the coalition.

He said the postponement is to give the parties an opportunity to attract as many new members as possible.

"We postponed the decision to allow them to think about it and want them to focus on attracting more members to their respective parties," he said, without disclosing the name of the four parties involved.

At present, the BN component parties are Umno, MCA, MIC, Gerakan and People's Progressive Party in the peninsula; SAPP, Akar, PBRs, UPKO and LDP in Sabah and PBB, SNAP, PBDS and SUPP in Sarawak.

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