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No place for extremism in Malaysia, says Dr Mahathir

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KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today there was no place for extremism in Malaysia and for the sake of unity he would continue to criticise extremists be they Malays, Chinese or Indians.

Speaking on Vision Schools, Dr Mahathir said a Chinese educationist extremist group purposely made it an issue to create disunity among the various races.

He, made it clear that he was merely criticising the Chinese educationist group, and not the community in general.

"As if they (the educationist group) do not admit to being Malaysians or that they have to be close with the other races. They want everything to be separated ... Chinese schools to be separated from other schools until they become foreign schools.

"Chinese schools in Malaysia are Malaysian schools although they use Chinese language as the medium of instruction.

"Any attempt to isolate the Chinese from other races will obstruct unity among the various races. My criticism is directed towards this small group. Its number is not big, but it is acting as if to intimidate or threaten the Government.

"That is why I consider them as extremists and I will criticise extremists whether they are Malays, Chinese or Indians. There is no place for extremists in Malaysia," he said.

Dr Mahathir was speaking at a Press conference after launching NTT MSC Sdn Bhd's Arcnet Internet service here.

He said the Vision School concept had nothing to do with the Chinese language and schools and that the Government was aware there was a need to set up new Chinese schools due to an increase in the Chinese population.

Dr Mahathir said the Government had to think of the country's future and wanted the various races to start living together right from their school days to establish good relations among them.

"Those who oppose this do so because it is a process to unite the people, not because they want to defend the Chinese language or teaching in the Chinese language."

Dr Mahathir said the Government had frequently re-assured the Chinese community that Chinese schools would be maintained.

In fact, he said the Education Act was amended to withdraw the powers vested on Education Minister to change the status of Chinese schools to national-type schools.

"We have done this after pressure from this same group. We thought that with the amendment to the Act, problems would not arise but this Chinese educationist extremist group raises the issue so that it can obstruct unity among the various races."

Dr Mahathir said the Government felt the Vision School concept would not obstruct the progress of Chinese schools and as such would not call it off.

He added that the Government stood firm in its plan to have university students live together regardless of whether they were Malay, Chinese or Indian.

"They must stay together. That too is a process of integration."

Responding to a question on Singapore's The Straits Times's allegation that Malaysia instigated Indonesia against the island republic, Dr

Mahathir said: "We have no comment. We know these people and their intentions. We will not make any comment."
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