

No response to merger of Chinese dialect groups

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THE Federation of Teo Chiu Associations Malaysia, representing the fourth-largest Chinese dialect group in the country, has proposed a confederation grouping all the seven largest dialect groups together.

The proposal, made by Teo Chiu federation president Teoh Beng Suang at an annual gathering of Teo Chiu community leaders in Ipoh, was widely publicised by the major Chinese newspapers this week but received no immediate response from most parties concerned.

The Federation of Chinese Associations, an umbrella body of all Chinese guilds and associations in Malaysia, has adopted a wait-and-see attitude.

Teoh, an Ipoh-based property developer, also proposed a brainstorming session of leaders of the seven dialect groups on how best these associations of dialect groups, or *xiang tuan*, could serve community and national interest, the Chinese press reported.

The seven federations are the Federation of Hokkien Associations, Federation of Hakka Associations, Federation of Kwang Tung Associations, Federation of Teo Chiu Associations, Federation of Kwangsi Associations, Federation of Hai Nan Associations and Federation of San Kiang Associations.

Latest official statistics show the Malaysian Chinese population at close to six million without giving a breakdown on dialect groups.

According to the unofficial estimate, the Hokkiens are the single largest group with a population of about 1.6 million, followed by the 1.2 million Hakka group. There are about

one million Cantonese and 600,000 Teo Chius.

The Hainanese and Kwangsi are said to be the minority groups, each having a population of about 200,000.

The Hokkien federation, headed by retired businessman Datuk Tong Yoke Kim, represents 167 member associations throughout the country, while the Hakka federation, led by Dr Choo Kooi Fook, has 65 member associations nationwide.

The Kwang Tung federation, which has 38 member associations, is headed by businessman Cheah Yuk Lin, while the Hai Nan federation, comprising about 100 member associations, is led by businessman Chiang Jwee Min.

Teoh, according to *Nanyang Siang Pau*, stated that the time had come for the Chinese dialect associations to work together for the common interest of the community.

He said that combined, the seven federations had tremendous strength in terms of manpower and resources and could contribute significantly to national and social economic development, the daily reported.

"Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has a positive view of the role played by the Chinese dialect associations as reflected in the speeches he made when opening the functions of these associations," Teoh was quoted as saying.

The invitation to the leaders of the seven federations to join Dr Mahathir for *buka puasa* in his official residence also showed the Prime Minister's approval of the federations' contributions to nation-building, he said.

● BUSINESS tycoon Tan

Sri Ngan Ching Wen, who had earlier led a group of Chinese community leaders to oppose the purchase of Nanyang Press by the MCA, lost his appeal in the Kuala Lumpur High Court against a High Court decision to register a Singapore High Court judgment, which ordered him to pay a Singapore firm S\$1.55mil (RM3.58mil).

According to Chinese press reports, on Dec 22, 1983, Ngan borrowed S\$1mil from a Singapore firm, Penin International Credit, at an annual interest rate of 14%.

Ngan defaulted in payment after paying S\$50,000 on Oct 1, 1998.

On Dec 22, 1999, Penin International Credit obtained a judgment against Ngan for S\$1.55mil in a Singapore High Court.

The firm proceeded to apply to register the judgment by the Singapore court in the Kuala Lumpur High Court for enforcement as Ngan is a Malaysian citizen.

Ngan applied to strike out the registration but his application was rejected by the Kuala Lumpur High Court on April 9 this year.

● THE Malaysian Chinese community has been told that infighting among Chinese politicians is far more dangerous than an Islamic country to the community.

Interviewed by *Sin Chew Jit Poh*, Javet Tay, adviser to the Federation of Alumni Associations of Taiwan Universities Malaysia, said the Chinese community need not overreact to the talk of Malaysia being an Islamic country but should view the power struggle among Chinese politicians with grave concern.