

13/11/2002

Chinese educationist groups under fire

KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. - Chinese education movements were today rapped for issuing "chauvinistic", "dangerous" and "seditious" statements opposing the teaching of Mathematics and Science in English.

Umno vice-president Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin described them as "a group of chauvinistic and unpatriotic people who do not respect or understand national policy".

Umno vice-president Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak urged the movements to give the proposal a chance to work. "It is not a `disaster'," he said, referring to the Dong Jiao Zong's reservations expressed yesterday.

"The groups cannot ask the Chinese community to oppose the Government's decision. Their action is dangerous and can be tantamount to sedition," he said.

Tan Sri Muhammad Muhammad Taib, the other Umno vice-president, said the two movements - the United Chinese School Committees Association (Dong Zong) and the United Chinese School Teachers Association (Jiao Zong) - were attempting to impose the views of a minority on the majority.

"The Chinese-based parties in Barisan Nasional have agreed and they represent the majority of the community.

"If we were to entertain (these movements), we will have no end of having to deal with every minority group which wants to oppose the views of the majority. No Government can function in such a situation," he said.

The Umno leaders were responding to the Chinese educationists' statement that the teaching of Mathematics and Science in English would spell the end of Chinese schools in the country.

Dong Zong and Jiao Zong at a Press conference yesterday contended that the decision made by the BN supreme council last month was against the "norms and principles" of education and the wishes of the people.

Muhyiddin said: "They can oppose the decision but they only represent a group of Chinese teachers, a minority who disagree, while there are millions of Chinese in this country who agree with the move."

Najib said Umno would monitor the movements closely, though he did not think the Sedition Act needed to be invoked.

"Let us see how things develop," he said. "If we take (such) action now, they will say that we are undemocratic."

Muhammad said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had repeatedly assured them that the move would not affect vernacular education or any community's cultural integrity.

Wanita Umno chief Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz said these groups refused to see the benefits of the move for the younger generation.

"It is not right to harbour this sentiment," she said. "The opposing quarters should come to terms with the reality by accepting the decision."

Umno Youth head Datuk Hishammuddin Hussein said the decision was reached by the BN after consultation with various Chinese organisations.

"There is no reason for Dong Jiao Zong to oppose the formula as the majority of Chinese organisations support the Government's move."

Puteri Umno head Azalina Othman Said said Dong Jiao Zong should realise that opposing the formula would lead to the segregation of the Chinese community from other races.

"They must realise that as Malaysians, they ought to support the Government's decision and play their role in achieving Vision 2020," she said.

Deputy Education Minister Datuk Abdul Aziz Shamsuddin said the group should not try to impose their views on the majority.

Saying that the associations were "protesting for the sake of protesting", Aziz suggested that they were merely attempting to protect their positions on the boards of management.

"We have not restricted the teaching and use of mother tongues, be it Mandarin, Tamil or other Bumiputera dialects, since Independence," he said at the Parliament lobby.

In Seremban, Negri Sembilan Menteri Besar Tan Sri Mohd Isa Abdul Samad described the movements' opposition as "prejudicial and selfish".

He said if the other races could accept the policy, why not Dong Jiao Zong?

Seremban Umno chief Datuk Ishak Ismail said Dong Jiao Zong's stance showed that its leaders were not interested in peace and stability.

"The Government should just ban these movements as their leaders keep on harping on sensitive issues that can disrupt peace and harmony."