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Ex-chief: Dong Jiao Zong doing a 'grave injustice' to Chinese community

Chok Suat Ling

KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. - A former chairman of the Dong Zong said today the Dong Jiao Zong Chinese education movement is doing a grave injustice to the Chinese community in Malaysia by continuing to reject multilingual education.

Dr Too Chee Cheong, who was the second chairman of Dong Zong, or the United Chinese School Committees Association of Malaysia, said the Chinese community in the country was "crippled" today because of the movement's continued insistence on the sole use of Mandarin in Chinese schools.

Dong Zong and Jiao Zong, the United Chinese School Teachers' Association of Malaysia, make up the Dong Jiao Zong.

The 78-year-old doctor, who helmed Dong Zong in the 1960s, said he was compelled to speak up now as he wanted "to give one last contribution to Chinese education".

He was confident that only Dong Jiao Zong and a minority of the Chinese community opposed the Government's move to teach Science and Mathematics in English.

"The silent majority are all in favour of the move to improve the standard of education.

"In fact, a survey conducted back in the 1980s showed that the Chinese supported multi-lingualism," Dr Too told a packed Press conference at his clinic near Petaling Street.

During the Press conference, Dr Too - who spoke in Mandarin before translating his own words into impeccable English - distributed research papers and journals to back his statements.

He also gave a historical outline of Chinese education and his experiences as chairman of Dong Jiao Zong.

Dong Jiao Zong, at a Press conference on Nov 11, described the teaching of Science and Mathematics in English as a "disaster" that would "spell the end" of Chinese schools in the country.

The Government, however, will proceed with the plan. The Barisan Nasional agreed to a special formula for Chinese schools, where the two subjects will be taught in both Mandarin and English.

Dr Too said while he respected the movement's efforts in building Chinese schools, its rejection of multi-lingualism had further polarised members of the community and this was "an even bigger disaster".

"There is polarisation between the English-speaking Chinese, those who attended English-medium and national schools, and the Chinese-speaking Chinese.

"This is because the Dong Jiao Zong did not want to accept multiple languages in Chinese schools or the Chung Ling School model, where both Mandarin and English were used.

"As a consequence, the students who come out of Chinese schools cannot speak or write English."

Dr Too said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's decision to teach the two subjects in English was a bold one, and supported by the Malays because the community realised the move would not jeopardise the position of Bahasa Melayu.

"Similarly, it will not jeopardise the Chinese language and culture."

Dr Too urged Dong Jiao Zong to accept the Government's decision, as mastery of English was essential.

He said it was "common knowledge" that Dong Jiao Zong bigwigs sent their

children abroad for education.

"This is dishonourable and tantamount to lying to the Chinese community."

Dr Too said he might be branded by Dong Jiao Zong as a "traitor" to the Chinese for his views but "I do not care".

"I owe it to my conscience to do this."