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English-Dong Zong

MAJORITY OF CHINESE SUPPORT MULTILINGUALISM, SAYS FORMER DONG ZONG  
CHAIRMAN

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 19 (Bernama) -- The majority of Chinese in the country are supportive of the government's move to use English to teach Science and Mathematics in Chinese primary schools, said a former Dong Zong chairman, Dr Too Chee Cheong.

Citing a 1985 survey conducted by Chinese daily, Sin Chew Jit Pao (now Sin Chew Daily) he said it showed that the majority of Chinese supported three or more languages in Chinese primary schools.

"I have proof of that (survey conducted by Sin Chew)...the report which said that the majority agreed to opening of Chinese schools to three languages," he told reporters at his dispensary here today.

Dr Too, 78, was the chairman of the United Chinese School Committees' Association of Malaysia (UCSCAM), or better known as Dong Zong, in 1960. Dong Zong and Federation of the Chinese School Teachers Association or Jiao Zong made up the Chinese education movement, known as Dong Jiao Zong.

As such, he said it was wrong for Dong Jiao Zong to mislead the Chinese community and that the community's opposition towards accepting any other language except the Chinese language was merely the opinion of the movement.

"The biggest disaster for the Chinese community is actually the polarisation of the community into two groups -- the Chinese speaking English and the Chinese speaking only Chinese," he said.

"I do have full respect for Dong Jiao Zong. They have done a good job as far as the Chinese education is concerned but the way they continue to refuse to accept multilingualism has led to the low standard of English among Chinese students," Dr Too said.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's wisdom to improve the English standard is very timely and the implementation of the policy have received supports from various races, including the Malays, he said.

"This is because they know that by mastering the language, it does not jeopardise Bahasa Malaysia," he said.

Dr Too said he tried to influence his colleagues in Dong Jiao Zong to support the bilingual or multilingual approach when he was the chairman of Dong Zong in 1960 but to no avail as they (Dong Jiao Zong) only wanted to set up a complete Chinese education system, right from primary to the tertiary level.

"Because of that, I was isolated and eventually left Dong Jiao Zong. They called me the traitor of the Chinese community, the running dog for the British Imperialism and I sell out the Chinese education," he said.

He also recalled the time when Dong Jiao Zong was invited by Education Minister at that time, Tun Dr Ismail to have dialogue with the Education Ministry when he was the Dong Zong president.

The meeting was also attended by Jiao Zong president, Sim Mo Yee. The official translator did not do his job well as he did not exactly translated what Sim said in Chinese to Tun Dr Ismail.

Dr Too said as a result he had to act as the translator for Sim on what he conveyed in Chinese to Tun Dr Ismail since he (Too) could converse well in English.

"The point is that, if I don't know English, Sim would have been taken for a ride and for not knowing English, there was this disadvantage for him in the conversation," he said.

Dr Too advised the present leaders of Dong Jiao Zong not to practise

double standard when championing the Chinese education issues when at the same time, they sent most of their children overseas, to pursue their education.

-- BERNAMA

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