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Stop stirring racial sentiments, groups told

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TANJUNG MALIM, Sat. - Extremist groups which oppose the decision to use English to teach Science and Mathematics in schools should stop their actions or face the music, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

The Prime Minister said action would be taken against them if they did not stop stirring racial sentiments which could jeopardise national security.

He also warned newspapers to stop supporting these groups or risk similar action.

He said the groups were also an obstacle to better relations between Malay and Chinese students.

"These people are not only against the move to introduce English for the teaching of Science and Mathematics, but also against Malay and Chinese students mixing with one another," he said.

He said these people had also been against government efforts to unite the races by opposing the Vision School concept.

Dr Mahathir, acknowledging that the opposition from the Chinese did not come from the entire community but from a small faction, said there were laws which could be used against them.

"They represent only a small group but have been using the newspapers to incite the people," he said, declining to name the media involved.

"I would like to advise these people not to play with fire as there are enough laws to check extremism," he said in response to a question at a Press conference after visiting Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris (UPSI) here.

He said the Government would proceed with the decision to teach Mathematics and Science in English.

On action to be taken against groups and media organisations involved, he said it was up to the enforcement authorities to decide.

"Action will be taken against whomever incites racial tension among the people or creates disorder in the country," he said.

He said the groups had continued to accuse the Government of planning to transform Chinese schools into national schools even though they were aware that the laws did not allow such a thing to be done. However, they were using the issue to instil fear in the Chinese, he said.

On the non-committal stand adopted by MCA on the issue, he said he would discuss the matter with it.

Dr Mahathir, who was on a day-long visit to Perak, was earlier briefed on the development of UPSI by its vice-chancellor Datuk Prof Dr Mohammad Noor Salleh before a dialogue with students.

Later, at a luncheon with Perak Barisan Nasional leaders in Ipoh, he appealed to them not to be influenced by extremist groups.

He said leaders should be sensitive to the feelings of the many races and make sacrifices for the good of all and not just for the sake of one race.

He said the issue should not be politicised as one's identity would not be changed by learning two subjects in English.

"Similarly, learning English will not turn anyone into an Englishman," he quipped.

He said the Government wanted to enable Malaysians to communicate effectively in the international arena by encouraging the use of English.

Also present were Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Tajol Rosli Ghazali, State

MCA chief Datuk Ong Ka Chuan, State MIC chief Datuk G. Rajoo and State Gerakan chief Datuk Chang Ko Youn.