

10 AUG 2002

Mahathir-Extremism

REFRAIN FROM INCITING RACIAL SENTIMENT, SAYS PM

TANJUNG MALIM, Aug 10 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today reminded racial extremists to refrain from raising racial issues over the move to use English in the teaching of science and mathematics in schools.

He said that the government would take action against those involved if their actions could lead to disharmony.

"In Malaysia, if anyone were to incite racial sentiment to the extent of creating disharmony, action will be taken before it happens," he told a media conference during his visit to the Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris (UPSI) here.

Dr Mahathir, who was asked to comment on the attitude of certain groups who were opposed to the move to use English in the teaching of the two subjects, said that the extremist groups do not have strong influence but they had used the press to incite others.

Dr Mahathir said that the extremist groups not only opposed the move to use English but also do not wish to see Malay and Chinese children mixing together.

He said that these groups had also opposed the proposal to set up Vision Schools.

"They're playing with fire...we're all aware that the law of our country does not allow the government to change Chinese schools to national schools but they injected fear among the Chinese...this is dangerous," he said.

The prime minister stressed that the country's law does not allow any parties including the press to raise racial issues.

"The allegation isn't true...if it's true than it's all right (but) it's not true altogether.

"We've no intention of changing Chinese schools to national schools because the law does not allow the government (to do so)," he said.

Dr Mahathir regretted that the parties concerned were still raising the issue even though the relevant law had been amended following pressure exerted by them.

Asked whether there was now reason to take action against these extremist groups, he said that it was up to the law enforcement authorities.

"If they found that it has reached a dangerous level, they will take action," he said.

He was also leaving it to the law enforcement authorities to whether or not take action against the newspapers which were also raising racial issues.

The prime minister said that the proposal to use English in the teaching of mathematics and science would be implemented as scheduled.

Earlier, in addressing students of the UPSI, Dr Mahathir called on them to place importance on the mastery of English to enable them to acquire knowledge in modern subjects.

This was essential to develop the strength of the race because people who lack knowledge would be undermined by those who had a strong command of the various subjects, he said.

Dr Mahathir said that the government decided on the use of English in the teaching of mathematics and science to enable the people in the country to acquire knowledge in the various fields.

He also called on educators to stress on the character development of the students to produce a future generation which could contribute to the nation's development.

The prime minister said that undergraduates should also mix in campus to ensure continuous racial harmony in future.

Dr Mahathir said that the government was prepared to spend some RM1.7 billion to develop UPSI's new campus as it felt responsible for the future of the nation.

-- BERNAMA

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