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PM: Punish trouble-makers (HL)

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KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today said the Education Ministry should punish students who cause trouble.

If they are not interested in studying, he said, they should be kept away from school.

"When they get together and are in groups, they become brave and disturb others," Dr Mahathir said at a Press conference after opening the Gerakan national delegates conference.

Dr Mahathir was asked to comment on the expulsion of 20 Form Five students of Sekolah Tuanku Abdul Rahman in Ipoh for involvement in gangsterism.

Dr Mahathir said the punishment was justified.

It was reported today that the students were trying to revive the "high council", a group feared by residential students many years ago.

The group forced juniors to do menial jobs and punished them for not doing them well.

Perak Education director Datuk Adnan Ibrahim had said the group's activities were discovered last year, and the members warned.

Dr Mahathir said the Education Ministry would look into the activities of the "high council" and whether similar groups were present in other schools.

Asked what he thought were among the factors contributing to increasing cases of gangsterism in schools, he said: "In my opinion, there are too many foreign films associated with sex and violence.

"Isn't there any other kind of films? Everything is to do with sex and violence. Terminator this, terminator that, shootings, killings.

"And this is not only happening in Malaysia. I met an ambassador from Japan recently and he told me it was no different in his country."

Years ago, Dr Mahathir said, there was no such thing as a child hitting his mother, shooting his father or anything like that.

"But today, we see these things happening here. And all these come from watching violent films.

"When we talk of censorship, everyone starts making an issue about freedom. Freedom for what... to kill someone?"

On relations between MCA and Gerakan, Dr Mahathir, who is Barisan Nasional chairman, said since leaders of both parties had expressed their willingness to work together, he was confident this would be translated into good results in the next general election, especially in Penang.

He also said there was no tussle among component parties for the new parliamentary and State seats created under the redelineation exercise.

"We can settle it amicably. When the time comes to discuss it, we will make a decision."

On mutual seat exchanges between BN members, Dr Mahathir said it was possible and it would be looked into.

He also said that the world had since recognised Malaysia as an Islamic State since he made the declaration at last year's Gerakan delegates' conference.

"The only one who disagrees with us is Pas and that is only a political stand, nothing to do with religion."