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KUALA LUMPUR, DEC. 13 (BERNAMA) — THE USE OF ENGLISH IS TO BE EXTENDED AS AN IMPORTANT SECOND LANGUAGE, DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AND EDUCATION MINISTER, DR. MAHATHIR MOHAMAD, TOLD T WOULD ALLOW THE USE OF ENGLISH AT THE HIGHER LEVEL OF TEACHING IN SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY.

DR. MAHATHIR SAID THE NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY WAS AIMED AT IMPLEMENTING BAHASA MALAYSIA AS THE MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION AT ALL LEVELS TO STRENGTHEN SOLIDARITY BETWEEN THE VARIOUS ETHNIC GROUPS IN THE COUNTRY.

SO FAR, THERE WAS NO EVIDENCE TO SHOW THAT THE USE OF BAHASA MALAYSIA HAD IMPEDED STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENTS IN THE SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY FIELDS.

AS PROOF, HE CITED THE CASE OF GRADUATES FROM UNIVERSITI KEBANGSAAN WHO WERE ABLE TO UNDERTAKE POST-GRADUATE STUDIES IN THE UNITED KINGDOM WITH OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENTS, ALTHOUGH INSTRUCTION THERE WAS IN ENGLISH. -- BERNAMA MORE 1745/LK

DR. MAHATHIR SAID THIS WAS BECAUSE ALL STUDENTS AT THE HIGHER EDUCATION LEVEL HAD SUFFICIENT MASTERY OF ENGLISH. 176

REPLYING TO SENATOR ZAWIYAH ABDULLAH, HE SAID AT THIS STAGE THE MINISTRY HAD NO PLANS TO MAKE IT COMPULSORY FOR EVERY MUSLIM CANDIDATE TO TAKE ISLAMIC STUDIES IN THE SRP/LCE AND SPM/MCE EXAMINATIONS.

THE MATTER WOULD BE STUDIED IN DETAIL FIRST BY THE ISMALIC RELIGIOUS EDUCATION COUNCIL. HE ADDED. -- BERNAMA 1751/LK