

Dr M: No compromise on Bahasa

KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. — Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today there was no compromise on the position of Bahasa Malaysia as the national language and that it should be referred to as such.

"Bahasa Melayu is the basic language and now it has developed. We have added new words suitable for use by the people of Malaysia. For this reason, we have called the language Bahasa Malaysia," he said.

Speaking at a Press conference after chairing the Umno supreme council meeting here, the party president said it had also discussed the proposed Education Act 1995 which would emphasise the use of Bahasa Malaysia as the country's official language.

Dr Mahathir said the Government would continue to uphold Bahasa Malaysia as the national language and (in this matter) "there is no compromise".

Asked to comment on the use of the term "Bahasa Melayu", Dr Mahathir said it was the mass media which used the term "Bahasa Melayu" instead of "Bahasa Malaysia".

The Bill would be tabled in Parliament in October, he said.

The preamble of the proposed Act, he said, would

clearly set out the aims of education, which is to provide the best knowledge to the people to enable them to compete with the people of other countries.

"Bahasa Malaysia will be used as much as possible to achieve that objective, but where necessary we will also use other languages, especially English," he said.

However, he said, the new Act would empower the Education Minister to exempt the use of Bahasa Malaysia as the medium of instruction for certain purposes.

The exemption, he said, could also be given to certain subjects considered important in national schools.

Dr Mahathir said the command and use of English was considered important to obtain knowledge and perform certain tasks.

For example, he said, the Foreign Ministry had to use English in its communications with other countries to "clearly explain our stand to the world".

Bahasa Malaysia, he said, was also a compulsory subject in Chinese and Tamil schools where the pupils were required to take the subject in their examinations.

He said the decision of the council on the new Act was a "unanimous one" made after an open debate.

Asked whether English would be made the medium of instruction in the field of science and technology, Dr Mahathir said this would be decided by the Education Minister.

Dr Mahathir also said the new Act which is "not an amendment of the old one" would cover private colleges.

He said the supreme council also discussed the party's 50th anniversary next year and that a committee, chaired by Umno deputy president Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, had been formed to organise the celebrations.

One of the main events, he said, would be the opening of Muzium Umno and he called on the members to give to the party, memorabilia, photographs or other items which have relevance to Umno's formation, history and activities for record or display.

A reporter also asked whether Umno would send show cause letters to those who had given false information against members who faced disciplinary action for allegedly working against the party in the last general election.

To this, Anwar, who is chairman of the party disciplinary committee, said it would do so if there was proof.