

# Maths, Science to be in English

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## Umno: No need to bring back English-medium schools

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KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. -- The Umno supreme council said today it was unnecessary to reintroduce the English-medium school system, but instead proposed that Science and Mathematics be taught in English.

Party president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the focus should be on assisting students master English and build a strong foundation in the language.

One way this could be achieved would be by studying contemporary English literature which involved works by current writers.

The Prime Minister said reintroducing English-medium schools would not be in line with the education policy.

"What needs to be done now is teaching English using a new approach and curriculum. We want the teaching to be done in a more effective way," he said after chairing a three-hour meeting of the Umno supreme council at Menara Datuk Onn.

Dr Mahathir said the council acknowledged English as the *lingua franca* and stressed the importance of Malaysians mastering the language.

"English is widely used in trade and international dealings. Agreements are often in English and if we do not have a good command of the language, we might agree to clauses which are actually against our interests."

On teaching Science and Mathematics in English, Dr Mahathir said Umno hoped this could be implemented as soon as possible, starting from Standard One.

He acknowledged the need to overcome the lack of qualified En-

glish teachers and facilities.

On whether English-medium schools would be introduced if the people wanted it despite Umno not favouring such a move, he said the Government would abide by the majority decision, adding the party was just stating its stand and views.

Dr Mahathir had said on Monday that the Government was willing to reintroduce English-medium schools, but wanted to hear what the people had to say.

He was responding to repented calls to the Government to do so to ensure Malaysia continued to have a competitive edge internationally.

The Prime Minister's comments received support from educationists, politicians, unions and community leaders who believed that while the move was feasible, much work needed to be done.

Dr Mahathir said the council also discussed the increase in the Bumiputera intake in public universities under the merit system.

This, he said, was due to the large number of Bumiputeras as compared to non-Bumiputeras.

"We thought that when merit is used, there would be a drop in the number of Bumiputeras but the opposite happened. The figure reached 68.9 per cent compared to only 55 per cent under the quota system."

Dr Mahathir said the council endorsed the Education Ministry's move to use merit for admission to public universities.

He, however, said it did not mean the quota system would be scrapped.

"We have announced that merit would be used this year, but for coming years, if there are going to be changes, it would be a different matter."

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# PM concerned over varsity polarisation

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While the increased Bumiputera intake might please the community, the Prime Minister said the Government was concerned as it could polarise public and private universities.

“It will result in public universities having too many Bumiputeras and private universities too many non-Bumiputeras. It means Bumiputeras and non-Bumiputeras will be segregated this is unhealthy.”

Dr Mahathir said steps would be taken to increase the number of Bumiputeras in private universities and colleges.

He was confident that the imbalance would be corrected in coming years when more non-Bumiputeras apply for admission into public universities.

Asked whether he was surprised that more Bumiputeras entered universities under the merit system, Dr Mahathir replied in the affirmative.

On scepticism over figures released yesterday by the Education Ministry on the intake, the Prime

Minister said those not satisfied could inspect Ministry records.

“I do not see the benefit of us purposely increasing the number of Bumiputera students.

“There has been no manipulation. The reason behind the increase is that non-Bumiputeras are not that interested to take STPM (Sijil Tinggi Persekolahan Malaysia).”

To a suggestion that the increase in the intake only occurred after his call for the merit system to be used for admission, Dr Mahathir said the suggestion was intended as a wake-up call.

Meanwhile, Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar said developments worldwide demanded that merit be the criterion for admission.

“This is so that we can compete on a global scale. No one can complain when others are offered places as it is all done based on merit,” he said.

Umno Youth education bureau chief Dr Adham Baba said public universities should offer more places for students.

“Based on the Education Ministry’s analysis, we see that a large number of Bumiputeras are eligible for places, but not all are offered because of the limited number of places.”

National Union of Teaching Profession secretary-general Datuk S. Siva Subramaniam said the implementation of the merit system would ensure students do not depend on the Government for a “free ride”.

DAP national vice-chairman Dr Tan Seng Giaw said the quota system should be abolished.

“The Government talks about educational excellence, and excellence means meritocracy. If admission now is truly made on merit, then the performance of Bumiputeras is encouraging as they do just as well.”

Education Ministry higher education department director Professor Dr Hassan Said yesterday said the intake of Bumiputeras into public higher educational institutions, which was based for the first time on meritocracy, increased to 68.9 per cent this year.