

POSITIVE TALKS

STAR 22 AUG 2002

PM, Chinese-based party leaders have 'constructive discussion' on language issue

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PUTRAJAYA: Heads of four Chinese-based parties of the Barisan Nasional met Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad ahead of a Cabinet meeting here to discuss the Government's move to improve English in the schools.

The 30-minute meeting with the Prime Minister was later described as "constructive" and, according to sources, the Prime Minister gave his own views on the matter.

They believe that Dr Mahathir

will offer a formula that will take into account the views of all communities.

The four leaders met the Prime Minister at his office in the morning before the Cabinet met yesterday to deliberate further on the move.

It is learnt that the four leaders expressed their views to the Barisan Nasional chairman, based on their studies and feedback, on the controversy to use English to teach Mathematics and Science in all schools from next year.

"The Prime Minister agreed to meet us this morning. We had a

good discussion," MCA president and Transport Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik told reporters after the Cabinet meeting.

He, however, declined to elaborate on the meeting.

Besides Dr Ling, the other leaders at the meeting were Gerakan president Datuk Seri Dr Lim Keng Yaik, Sarawak United People's Party president Tan Sri Dr George Chan Hong Nam and Sabah Progressive Party president Datuk Yong Teck Lee.

Dr Chan and Yong also agreed that the discussion with the Prime Minister was "a constructive one"

but declined to give any insight on what transpired.

Dr Mahathir was reported as saying last Sunday that the Government would consider every proposal pertaining to the move to improve English.

Education Minister Tan Sri Musa Mohamad announced last month a move to use English to teach Mathematics and Science in stages from Year One, Form One and Form Six in national schools from next year.

Musa said the usage of the language in vernacular schools would depend on a "political decision"

among Barisan component parties.

Leaders from the 15 Barisan component parties achieved a consensus on the issue and submitted their views to Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi on Tuesday.

Abdullah had said he would submit their views to Dr Mahathir at this week's Cabinet meeting.

The Barisan leaders, who attended the coalition's management committee meeting chaired by Abdullah here, said they expected the Cabinet to decide and announce a formula on the issue within two weeks,