

PLEA FOR ENGLISH

Mahathir: We must move forward together in education

STAR 15 OCT 2002

By SHAHANA AZ HABIB

KUALA LUMPUR: Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has made an impassioned plea to all races to accept English as the medium for the teaching of Mathematics and Science.

The Prime Minister said the ruling Barisan Nasional coalition had enjoyed success in many areas such as politics, restructuring the economy as well as forging good relations among the races.

"But there is one area, I feel a little aggrieved (*terkilan*) - education. I want us to move forward together in education. We need to address imbalances among the races in education so that we can stride forward together," he said in his opening speech at the Federal Territory Barisan Nasional convention yesterday.

He said the current era was one of science and technology where new knowledge moved so rapidly that it was difficult to keep up with the pace.

He said that every day a new book on the latest developments was out and hundreds of articles of new findings by experts published in journals, adding that all these were in English.

"We cannot chase after this latest knowledge, if we stick to our mother tongue (for Mathematics and Science) That is why the Government proposed to use English for these two subjects because immediately all this knowledge will be open to us.

"What will happen to us if we are left behind without enough knowledge to compete with others?"

"That is why we want everybody to start together. That is my appeal to you. Some of you may not be happy but we all have to make sacrifices.

"I studied in English from primary school to the time I became a doctor. Look at me, am I an Englishman now?"

"We are not trying to victimise anybody. We just want to do this together. I am confident that we will be able to march forward together on this," he added.

Dr Mahathir also stressed that Malaysia's policy was not one of assimilation and that each ethnic group was free to retain its own culture, religion and practices.

● TURN TO PAGE FOUR

PM: Don't base decisions on emotion

● FROM PAGE ONE

"But we want to work together for a common end. That is what Barisan is all about. Think. If you love something, you should think of its overall good. Do not let emotion cloud you," he said.

The Government has proposed to teach Mathematics and Science in English in all schools, including vernacular

ones at Year One, Form One and Lower Six starting from next year.

But there have been reservations over the proposal from even Barisan parties, especially concerning the switch at the primary Chinese national schools.

Dr Mahathir said Barisan had always believed in discussion and consensus.

"All our decisions should be

based on logic and reason without being influenced by emotions and feelings. So keep calm and don't be angry," he said.

He said each party in Barisan, regardless of size, had three representatives at the coalition's supreme council to give it an equal voice.

"But if one party pulls in one direction and another

party in the other, then Barisan would not be successful," he said.

Earlier in his speech, Dr Mahathir also said Malaysians should be "justly proud" of themselves for the ability to live together in harmony.

He said regardless of where their ancestors came from, they were all Malaysians and this was their country.