

DPM: Allow other views

SUN 27 OCT 2002

Be flexible on Science and Maths issue, MCA told

KUANTAN: Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi hopes the MCA will be flexible in discussing the government's proposal to teach Science and Mathematics in English in primary schools next year.

The Deputy Prime Minister said discussions on the issue have not been concluded and the cabinet has not made a final decision.

"I think, whatever differences in opinion may exist can be resolved when we discuss the issue at the (Barisan Nasional) supreme council meeting and in the cabinet.

"Eventually, the cabinet will make a decision," he told reporters after opening the Pahang Barisan Nasional (BN) Convention here.

Abdullah was commenting on reports that the MCA Central Committee (CC), the party's highest decision-making body, had unanimously decided to oppose the government's move to implement the proposal in Chinese primary schools.

MCA president Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik was reported to have told the two-hour CC meeting on Friday that he was in favour of promoting English proficiency among students but it should start only in Chinese secondary schools.

"We have not made a decision but they (MCA) have voiced their stand. I hope their stand will not be a very firm one to the extent that they will not take into account alternative views that will be proposed later," he said.

He said any decision involving government policies must be discussed by the cabinet.

Abdullah said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had always consulted the party on important issues.

"Dr Mahathir has said he needs to think carefully. This is one matter Dr Mahathir has been considering for a long time, and has held extensive consultations with various interest

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Mahathir does not want country to lose out: DPM

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groups in education, non-governmental organisations, political parties and intellectuals.

"Dr Mahathir has said, as the head of government, he doesn't want the country to lose out when a decision is made later," Abdullah said.

He said the prime minister had often stressed that the decision to be taken must be in the students' best interests.

"As far as I can remember, Mahathir has never held such extensive consul-

tations on a matter to be implemented except when the country was facing the economic downturn," Abdullah said.

He said he believed the approach taken would be similar to that adopted in handling the economic downturn - initially creating doubts and drawing criticism but eventually proving to be effective.

"Any decision made after consultations and brainstorming with various groups must be accepted as it is a consensus decision," he said.