

# Only Cabinet will decide on Science and Maths

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KUANTAN: It is the Cabinet that will decide on the proposal to teach Science and Mathematics in English in primary schools next year, said Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

The Deputy Prime Minister said discussions on the issue had not concluded and the Cabinet had not made a final decision.

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

"Eventually, the Cabinet will make a decision," he said after opening the Pahang Barisan Convention here yesterday.

*Bernama* quoted Abdullah as saying this when he was asked to comment on newspaper reports that the MCA Central Committee (CC) had wanted the use of mother tongue to teach the two subjects in primary schools and the use of English for the two subjects in secondary schools only.

"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 alterna-

tive views that will be proposed later," he said, adding that any decision involving government policies had to go through the Cabinet.

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

He said Dr Mahathir had often stressed that the decision to be made had to take into account the students' future.

"As far as I can remember, Dr Mahathir had never held such extensive consultations on a matter to be implemented except during the time when the country was facing the economic downturn," he said.

He said he believed the approach to the use of English to teach Science and Mathematics would be similar to that taken to tackle the economic downturn, which had initially created doubts and drew criticism from the international community but eventually proved to be effective.

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

In Langkawi, Deputy Education Minister Datuk Abdul Aziz Shamsuddin said the Government had not reached the stage of disappointment over MCA's stand on the issue.

"The Government has not come to that stage yet because we think there is still room for consultations," he said after closing a seminar on the management of co-operatives co-organised by Gabungan Koperasi Guru Nasional and Koperasi Usaha Bersama.

In Petaling Jaya, MCA Youth chief Datuk Ong Tee Keat said although he was not at the party's CC meeting last Friday, the organisation had always had a consistent stand on the issue of the use of English in the teaching of Mathematics and Science.

"We have always said the issue has to be properly dissected, weighed and deliberated upon carefully and should never be seen in the political perspective.

"Any decision should be based on the interest of future generations and our ability to compete globally," he said after launching the "Proper English, My English" project at MCA headquarters yesterday.