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BN resolves English issue (HL)

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KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. - Barisan Nasional today resolved the issue of teaching Science and Mathematics in English when Chinese-based component parties agreed to the implementation of the policy in national-type Chinese primary schools from Standard One next year.

The BN supreme council meeting also agreed to the request from the four parties that slight modifications be allowed for the implementation of the policy in Chinese schools.

MCA, Gerakan, Sabah Progressive Party and Sarawak United People's Party had requested that certain periods be reduced to accommodate the teaching of the two subjects in English, apart from additional periods for English Language.

At the same time, the two subjects would still be taught in Mandarin.

The modifications for Chinese schools would see 15 periods allocated for Mandarin be reduced to 12 per week, while a period each would be reduced for Physical Education and Moral Education.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who chaired the two-hour BN supreme council meeting, said four extra periods would also be added, increasing the number of periods from 46 to 50 per week.

"This will mean we have an extra nine periods per week, four of which will be used to teach Mathematics in English; three for the teaching of Science in English and two new periods for English."

Speaking to reporters after the meeting at the Putra World Trade Centre, Dr Mahathir said: "The present six periods used to teach Mathematics in Mandarin and three to teach Science in Mandarin will be retained."

Dr Mahathir stressed that these modifications would not affect the number of periods allocated for teaching Bahasa Malaysia in Chinese primary schools, which remains at nine per week.

He said these modifications also meant that primary Chinese schools students would have to take their Science and Mathematics school examinations in Mandarin and English.

MCA president Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik later explained that as far as the national examination of Ujian Penilaian Sekolah Rendah (UPSR) was concerned, the Chinese parties would leave it to the Education Ministry to decide.

Dr Mahathir said these modifications were presented to the BN supreme council by Dr Ling, who is also the spokesman for the four parties.

There are five Chinese-based parties in the BN, including the Liberal Democratic Party. The LDP had prior to this said it would support whatever decision made by the Federal Cabinet on the matter.

Details of the modifications were that the 50 periods for Chinese schools next year would consist of nine periods for Bahasa Malaysia; English Language (two); Mandarin (12); Mathematics in Mandarin (six); Mathematics in English (four); Science in Mandarin (three); Science in English (three); Moral Education (four); Physical Education (two), Music (two); Art (two) and school assembly (one).

Asked if this meant that the issue had been resolved with the Chinese-based parties, Dr Mahathir said: "As far as the BN is concerned, the issue is settled. However, I believe the Opposition and the Dong Jiao Zhong (Chinese educationists association) will exploit it. They will not agree with anything."

Dr Mahathir said the modifications would be used in Chinese primary

schools for the next four to five years.

Asked if the modifications would impose an extra burden on the students, the Prime Minister said this was the best compromise the BN could make without completely rejecting the proposals from the Chinese component parties.

Further asked if he expected any similar demands from the Malay community, Dr Mahathir said: "That is left to the Malay leaders whether they want to burden their children.

"Umno had earlier decided something slightly different, but for the sake of BN unity, I, as a representative of Umno and my colleagues present here, accept the responsibility to make slight modifications to the Umno stand."

He said there were no conditions attached to the proposal by the Chinese-based parties.

"We discussed the proposal forwarded and we reached a compromise," he said.

He said the modifications did not affect Tamil schools and applied only to Chinese schools.