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PM: Pas deceiving people (HL)

Firdaus Abdullah

PUTRAJAYA, Sun. - Pas has no moral standing to question the proposed teaching of Mathematics and Science subjects in English as it has never championed the national language, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

He said the Opposition party should stop deceiving the people, especially the rural folks.

Dr Mahathir said Pas should not pretend to be championing the national language as it had openly declared their opposition to the "special rights" enjoyed by the Malays.

"I don't see the reason why Pas wants to champion Bahasa Melayu now when they have openly vouched to abolish the special privileges of the Malays.

"Hadi (Pas acting-president Datuk Seri Hadi Awang) himself had stated very clearly that if he came to power, he would abolish the special privileges enjoyed by the Malays.

"Essentially, he is not interested in safeguarding Bahasa Melayu ... so there is no ground for them to oppose (the teaching of Maths and Science in English)," Dr Mahathir said.

He was asked to comment on Pas' harping on the issue of the proposed re-introduction of English (for the teaching of Maths and Science subjects) in schools in its Pendang and Anak Bukit by-election campaign. It claims that the Government was "selling-off" the national language.

"This is purely political, nothing more ... they are willing to politicise everything, including the religion itself.

"There is nothing that they have done which does not aim to solicit votes," he said.

The Prime Minister was speaking at a Press conference after the Le Tour De Langkawi 2002 appreciation luncheon and official launch of Le Tour De Langkawi 2003 at the Putrajaya Marriot Hotel here.

Asked about the derogatory statements made by Opposition leaders at their ceramah, Dr Mahathir said that such bad practices were actually promoted by their leaders who claimed to be ulama and religious-supremos.

"I am sad and perplexed as to how such leaders, who claim to be scholars and such, could condone such immoral acts and abusive language.

"What kind of a culture do the Pas leaders hold on to ... I don't know!," he said.

The Prime Minister said that if Pas was unhappy over something that the Government or its leaders had done, it should come out in the open and voice its grievances, rather than resorting to immoral acts and abusive language.

Dr Mahathir, who is also Umno president, said he was confident the people would be able to see the "true colours" of the Opposition leaders from their actions and statements.

On his proposed one-day visit to the Pendang and Anak Bukit constituencies tomorrow, he said that he wished to tell the people to refrain from indulging in unIslamic activities and practices.

On Barisan Nasional's chances of recapturing both the State and parliamentary seats, Dr Mahathir said the ruling coalition had a good chance but "victory demands hardwork". On a related matter, he said that the special Cabinet meeting to discuss the introduction of English as a teaching-language in schools was postponed as most of the Ministers were busy.

"But we have plenty of time for us to have a briefing and determine if it (the proposed method of implementation) is practical," he said.