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In English and in phases (HL)

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KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. - Science and Mathematics will be taught in English in phases from next year in all national schools, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said tonight.

He said the Cabinet at a special meeting today decided on this after taking into account the views of Ministers and recommendations from the committee set up to determine the implementation.

"The committee explained the problems that would crop up if the move is to be implemented at all levels ... it is quite a burden, so we have to review it."

However, no decision was made on whether the move would include national-type Chinese and Tamil schools, the Prime Minister said after attending a play titled Anugerah at the City Hall auditorium.

Dr Mahathir said the Cabinet also decided that public examinations for the two subjects would be bilingual, a move the Cabinet felt was best after taking into consideration the capabilities of students.

He said the Cabinet was briefed on the methods of implementation and the constraints, adding the committee's recommendations would be further deliberated at the normal weekly Cabinet meeting.

Meanwhile, sources said the Cabinet's decision that the two subjects be taught in English was to enable Malaysians to master Science and Mathematics, essential for the country in its quest to reach developed nation status.

"The Government realises the obvious need for Malaysians to master the two subjects because the bulk of available resources for the subjects is in English," they said.

"Hence, it was decided that the subjects be taught in the language.

"The issue is not so much about improving the standard of English but more about equipping Malaysians with knowledge."

Education Minister Tan Sri Musa Mohamad had earlier said he would announce the method of implementation after the special Cabinet meeting, which had been scheduled for last Tuesday but postponed to today.

However, Musa did not speak to reporters after the meeting. Instead, he will hold a Press conference tomorrow morning at Sekolah Agama Persekutuan Labu in Nilai after launching the school's anniversary celebrations.

According to sources, today's Cabinet decision was made after a briefing by the director-general of education Datuk Abdul Rafie Mahat who headed a committee set up to determine the method of implementation for the teaching of the two subjects in English.

Sources said the Cabinet also agreed in principle for Science and Mathematics teachers to be given incentives.

The type and structure of the incentives would be worked out later.