

23/10/2002

It's for all primary schools (HL)

Zubaidah Abu Bakar; Patrick Sennyah; Chow Kum Hor

KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. - The Barisan Nasional today reached a consensus that English will be used to teach Science and Mathematics in all primary schools beginning next year, with some "modifications" for national-type Chinese schools.

Prime Minister and BN chairman Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the five Chinese-based parties had asked for a week to decide on these modifications.

Asked if this meant that Chinese schools were exempted from using English to teach the two subjects, Dr Mahathir said: "They are not exempted. We will find a way for the schools to implement the new policy.

"The implementation may be different, but it will be carried out in the same spirit," he said after chairing a three-hour BN supreme council meeting.

Dr Mahathir said the five parties - MCA, Gerakan, Sabah Progressive Party, Sarawak United People's Party and the Liberal Democratic Party - would report to him any modification or counter-proposal they might have.

MCA and Gerakan had earlier opposed the proposal to teach the two subjects in English in Chinese primary schools.

Dr Mahathir said the meeting also reached a consensus on a higher standard of English to be taught as a subject in all primary and secondary schools to ensure greater proficiency in the language.

"We also agreed that English be used to teach Science and Mathematics in all secondary schools beginning next year."

Asked what reasons the MCA and the other Chinese-based parties had given in asking for the one-week consultation period, Dr Mahathir said it was confidential.

"There were various views and opinions. There is no need for me to elaborate. Let (the Chinese-based parties) have their consultations first. It is our intention to start together and we will try our best to do it."

The MCA central committee had on Friday unanimously decided to oppose the Government's proposal while earlier on Aug 17, the Gerakan CC also opposed the proposal.

On another matter, Dr Mahathir said the meeting had approved the amendments to the BN constitution to officially establish the BN deputy chairman's post and BN Wanita and Youth movements.

"We will have BN Youth and Wanita BN. We will also have a deputy chairman and have agreed it will be Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

"(Abdullah) will chair the BN meeting when I am not around."

Meanwhile, MCA president Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik, after the meeting, said the Chinese-based parties would look into whether to continue using Chinese to teach both subjects, use English in part, or follow some other model.

He declined comment when asked if the Chinese parties could reach a consensus within one week or when they would have their first meeting.

"Do not speculate," he said.

Gerakan deputy president Datuk Seri Kerk Choo Ting said one week would be sufficient for them to come to a decision.

Earlier this month, Education Minister Tan Sri Musa Mohamad had said the teaching of Science and Mathematics in English would proceed as planned for Standard One, Form One and Lower Six in national schools next year.

He had said the ministry would implement the policy, but did not dismiss the possibility that some changes might be made to the method of implementation, and that some schools might be excluded.