

09 OCT 2002

Mahathir-English

MASTER ENGLISH TO GAIN KNOWLEDGE, SAYS PM

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 9 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said tonight that a good command of English is essential to help one acquire knowledge quickly.

As such the Prime Minister urged all parties not to politicise the government's move to use English to teach Science and Mathematics in schools.

"Education is very important for children. Do not turn education into a political matter," he said.

"If we love our children, if we love our brothers and sisters, do not use education as a political issue," he said at a mammoth gathering at the Stadium Putra in Bukit Jalil here.

The gathering, organised by the Federation of Malaysian Chinese Associations, was attended by more than 10,000 people representing various organisations of all races.

The gathering, held to show support for the government's efforts to teach Science and Mathematics in English, was also attended by Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and several ministers.

Stressing that the government has no intention to abolish the language of any community, Dr Mahathir said the government wanted the younger generation to get the best education and to master knowledge.

He said it was important to make the coming generations capable of competing with the world community apart from helping to realise the vision to turn Malaysia into a developed country by 2020.

"Don't gamble with the future of children. Give consideration with calm and rational thinking for the future of children," he said.

The Prime Minister said actions preventing children from getting education would only be detrimental to their future.

Dr Mahathir said knowledge was expanding rapidly, especially in science, and books and writings on this subject were in English.

Almost every day new books and journals on science were published and it was not possible for all these publications to be translated into the national language or other languages in this country as quickly as they were published, he said.

He said that only by mastering English could the people in this country acquire knowledge at a faster pace so as not to be left behind by development.

Dr Mahathir said that the people would not lose their identity by seeking knowledge in English.

Citing himself as an example, the Prime Minister said he was educated in English but this did not make him less Malay.

Dr Mahathir reiterated his assurance to teachers that the government would not remove anyone from their jobs and would train them to use modern equipment like computers to help them to learn and teach in English.

He said although the government's intention was to introduce the use of English in all schools, the government had not yet made a final decision on the matter because it was still studying various aspects, including factors of ability and courseware to be used by teachers.

The views of all parties would be considered before the government made the decision, he said.

He said the government was aware that it would not be easy to switch from the national language to English simultaneously in all schools because

thorough preparations had to be made.

However, he stressed that any decision that the government would take would not harm the future of students.

At the ceremony, Dr Mahathir and Abdullah also viewed computer equipment that will be used by teachers to teach English.

The gathering also witnessed a performance by a local lion dance troupe that has won the world championship 10 times.

-- BERNAMA

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