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Mixed reaction to MCA's stand

KUALA LUMPUR, Sun. - There was a mixed reaction from Barisan Nasional component parties and the Opposition to the MCA's stand opposing the Government's proposal to teach Science and Mathematics in English in Chinese primary schools next year.

While some thought that MCA, a major BN component party, should have discussed the matter further with its partners, the Opposition was of the opinion that this was an indication for the Government to reconsider the move.

Umno vice-president Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak said the Government would be able to resolve the issue and that an amicable solution would be reached based on tolerance and the spirit of unity among all parties involved.

"Although a final decision has yet to be made, I am confident that a wise decision will be reached after consultations with all parties," Najib, who is Pahang Umno liaison deputy chief, said at the Pahang Barisan Nasional Convention 2002 in Kuantan today.

Umno vice-president Tan Sri Muhammad Taib said the matter should be discussed in a familial spirit with BN parties as it had a major impact on education and the future of the younger generation.

Umno Youth education bureau head Dr Adham Baba said the move showed that MCA leaders did not have confidence in themselves.

"We, in Umno Youth, hope that MCA will not obstruct the move to teach Science and Mathematics in English."

Umno Youth executive council member Subahan Kamal said being the second largest component party in the BN, MCA should work hard towards achieving a Bangsa Malaysia.

"There were issues where MCA had asked Umno to compromise and, thus, it is only fair that this time, MCA compromises on the need of future generations."

In Penang, MCA president Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik, when asked to comment on the party's central committee's decision, said: "I will not discuss it in the Press."

He said that he had always made it a point not to discuss the issue in public because he wanted "to take away the emotion and politics away from it".

Asked if the party's decision would be conveyed to the BN supreme council meeting, he said it would only do so if the issue was on the agenda.

In Johor Baru, MCA vice-president Datuk Seri Ong Ka Ting said it was "too heavy" for him to comment on the issue.

Gerakan had earlier made a counter-proposal that only secondary schools teach Science and Mathematics in English.

The party had also proposed that English terminologies be introduced in textbooks in both subjects in Standard Four, with some bilingual text to be used in Standard Five and Six.

MIC president Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu, when contacted, declined to comment.

PPP president Datuk M. Kayveas said such differences of opinion surfaced when political parties were pressured to champion the needs of one group (race). "This is why PPP has been pressing for a single Bangsa Malaysia with a single schooling system."

In Jelebu, Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Dr Rais Yatim said MCA had finally come out in public with views which had been privately held so far.

DAP secretary-general Kerk Kim Hock said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad should seek the least divisive way to implement what he thought was best for the country.

Pas Youth chief Mahfuz Omar said MCA's stand against the use of English to teach Mathematics and Science in Chinese primary schools proved that the decision was not made in the spirit of BN.

The Liberal Democratic Party is leaving the decision of using English to teach Science and Mathematics in Chinese primary schools to the wisdom of the Government.

LDP president Datuk Chong Kah Kiat said in Kota Kinabalu that it had always been the party's stand to leave the matter to the Cabinet.