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No discrimination, says PM (HL)

Firdaus Abdullah

KUALA LUMPUR, Wed. - Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad reiterated tonight that the Government would not discriminate against any group or race in the teaching of Mathematics and Science in English from next year.

The Prime Minister also assured teachers that their services would not be terminated, as alleged by certain quarters, due to the decision to utilise information and communications technology (ICT) as a principal teaching tool.

"I'm seeking your support to allow the Government to study this matter after listening to the views and aspirations of all Malaysians irrespective of race or religion. We will only make the final decision after considering everything, and I hope the people will accept the Government's decision because this Government has never discriminated against the people of any race.

"Teachers, too, need not worry about being terminated or replaced because what we intend to replace is only the method of teaching," Dr Mahathir said.

Addressing an audience of more than 10,000 at Putra Stadium in Bukit Jalil here tonight, Dr Mahathir urged the people not to politicise the issue as it was an important matter that would determine the future of Malaysia and Malaysians.

"If we love our children, if we love our brothers and sisters, do not use education as a political issue, don't gamble with our children's future," he said.

The event, organised by the Federation of Chinese Associations, involved 500 associations and business guilds representing all the races, including the Orang Asli and more than 140 Chinese associations.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysians, being multiracial, must move ahead as a united people.

"We want to do things together. If every race heads in a different direction, we can never be united.

"We are aware that it is not easy for the shift (to English) at one go. That is why we are still studying the method of implementation. We want to know how to do it without harming anyone."

The mammoth gathering was held to express support for Dr Mahathir's proposals to enhance the capabilities of Malaysians, and to express solidarity with the Government's decisions on the teaching of Mathematics and Science in English.

In his speech, broadcast live over Radio Televisyen Malaysia, Dr Mahathir said the Government had heard the views of various associations and political leaders but felt the people should also be heard.

"This matter involves our children, so we also want the views of parents and the younger generation ... we want to know how they feel and I'm thankful for your strong support tonight," he told the crowd, to thunderous applause.

Dr Mahathir assured the people that the Government was not trying to abolish any language or school in its efforts to advance the use of English.

"The law is there to protect all the schools in Malaysia, whatever the language," he said, adding that the Government needed all Malaysians to be well educated so that the nation would be internationally competitive.

During the function, the Prime Minister also launched the "Computer

Teaching Methods" exhibition, which showcases the courseware and interactive teaching methods the Education Ministry plans to introduce in all schools from next year.

Earlier, Federation of Chinese Associations president Liew Poon Siak thanked Dr Mahathir and expressed the community's appreciation for his leadership for the past 21 years.

Liew also expressed support for the Government's decision to enhance the level of English among students, saying it was a wise move to secure a better future for Malaysians of all races.

"I also plead with all Malaysians not to turn this into a political issue because it involves our children's future. I plead for all to support our Prime Minister in implementing this new policy."

Also present were Datuk Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, Ministers and Education Ministry director-general Datuk Rafie Mahat.