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NUTP concerned over switch to English

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KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. - The National Union of Teaching Profession (NUTP) has expressed concern that teaching Science and Mathematics in English may make it difficult for the Government to achieve its 60:40 target ratio of Science to Maths students.

In a memorandum handed to the Education Ministry on Tuesday, the NUTP said this was because students with an average command of the language would avoid taking the subjects.

NUTP secretary-general Datuk N. Siva Subramaniam said rural students, who do not live in an English-speaking environment, would find it difficult to understand the Science and Mathematics syllabi.

"We have not come across any study which states that teaching Science and Mathematics in English is more effective than in Bahasa Melayu or other languages.

"How well a person masters a language is solely up to his or her own efforts.

"Many countries use English as a medium of instruction in schools but they are less developed than Malaysia."

Siva said there was also a high likelihood that many teachers might continue teaching the two subjects in Bahasa Melayu as they were not adept in English.

"Currently, there are schools which even conduct English classes in Bahasa Melayu, in that half of teaching and learning activities are in the Malay language."

Among other recommendations made by the NUTP in the memorandum are for:

- * Science and Mathematics to be taught in English for TV Pendidikan or Education TV, and the programme aired during primetime so that parents could watch them together with their children,

- * A committee comprising representatives from the School Inspectorate and education associations to be established to monitor the teaching of the two subjects, and,

- * The ministry to give an undertaking that examinations for the two subjects would not be in English for the time being so as to give teachers and students adequate time to prepare.

Siva said the Bahasa Melayu syllabus should also be revised to ensure students would not be "lost" after being given extra exposure to English in school.

"Otherwise, they will face problems as when they leave school, 90 per cent of official and unofficial correspondence will be in Bahasa Melayu" he added.

Education Minister Tan Sri Musa Mohamad said yesterday that the method of implementation for the teaching of the two subjects in English would be disclosed after a special Cabinet meeting chaired by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad on July 16.