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Abdullah-English

ONLY CABINET WILL DECIDE ON ENGLISH FOR SCIENCE, MATHS, SAYS ABDULLAH

KUANTAN, Oct 20 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said today only the Cabinet will decide on the government's proposal to teach Science and Mathematics in English in primary schools next year.

The Deputy Prime Minister said discussions on the issue have not concluded and the Cabinet had not made a final decision.

"I think, whatever differences in opinion, can be resolved when we discuss the issue at the supreme council (BN) meeting and in the Cabinet.

"Eventually, the Cabinet will make a decision," he told reporters after opening the Pahang Barisan Nasional (BN) Convention here.

Abdullah said this when asked to comment on newspaper reports today that the MCA Central Committee (CC), the party's highest decision-making body, had unanimously decided to oppose the government's move to implement the proposal in Chinese primary schools.

MCA president Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik was reported to have told the two-hour CC meeting on Friday that he was in favour of promoting English proficiency among students but it should start only in Chinese secondary schools.

"We have not made a decision but they (MCA) have voiced their stand. I hope their stand will not be a very firm one to the extent that they will not take into account alternative views that will be proposed later," he said.

He said any decision involving government policies must go through the Cabinet.

He said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had always consulted important issues with the party.

"Dr Mahathir has said he needs to think carefully. This is one matter Dr Mahathir has been considering for a long time, has held extensive consultations with various interest groups whether they are involved in education, non-governmental organisations, political parties and intellectuals.

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"Dr Mahathir has said, as the head of government, he doesn't want the country to lose out when a decision is made later," he said.

He said Dr Mahathir had often stressed that the decision to be made later need to take into account the students' future.

"As far as I can remember, Dr Mahathir has never held such extensive consultations on a matter to be implemented except during the time when the

country was facing the economic downturn," he said.

Abdullah said he believed the issue on using English to teach Science and Mathematics would be similar to the approach taken to tackle the economic downturn which initially created doubts and drew criticism from the international community but eventually proved to be effective.

"Whatever decision made after consultations and brainstorming with various groups must be accepted as it is a consensus decision," he said.

In LANGKAWI, Deputy Education Minister Datuk Abdul Aziz Shamsuddin said the government had not reached the stage of disappointment over MCA's decision on the issue.

"The government has not come to that stage yet because we think there is still room for consultations," he said.

He said the ministry was not against MCA's views on the matter as Malaysia was a democratic country.

"I am sticking to the call by Dr Mahathir for the future of our children," he told reporters when asked to comment on the matter after closing a seminar on cooperatives' management co-organised by Gabungan Koperasi Guru Nasional and Koperasi Usaha Bersama.

He said the government would not interfere in the administration of certain school boards but if everyone heed Dr Mahathir's advice for the future of the younger generation, Science and Mathematics would be taught in Standard One, Form One and Lower Six.

Asked whether the ministry would meet MCA over the issue, he said, it was up to the minister to decide but did not rule out the possibility of a meeting with the party.

"The matter will be brought to the Cabinet. If the boards of certain schools are against the proposal as stated by Dr Ling, then, we will go-ahead with the proposal in national schools," he added.

-- BERNAMA

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