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PM: BN must speak as one (HL)

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SUBANG, Mon. - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad wants Barisan Nasional component parties to speak with one voice and reach a consensus on the use of English to teach Mathematics and Science.

Dr Mahathir who is BN chairman said if each component party had its own stand, it would portray a coalition that had lost its BN spirit.

"If we don't want to agree, we don't agree. If we want to agree, we agree. Whatever it is, we will discuss it within the BN," he said, when asked about pressure from within the coalition for the Government not to implement its plan to use English to teach Mathematics and Science in primary schools next year.

Speaking upon his return from his overseas trip at the Royal Malaysian Air Force base here, tonight, Dr Mahathir said component parties must understand the concept of BN.

"The whole idea is that members should try and discuss things rationally and reach a consensus.

"The consensus, of course, may differ from what people outside (the BN) say. Maybe the consensus is to reject or modify ...give BN a chance to discuss (the matter)."

Present at the air base to welcome him and his wife Datuk Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamed Ali were Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, Datuk Seri Najib Abdul Razak, Selangor Menteri Datuk Seri Dr Mohd Khir Toyo, several ministers and deputy ministers.

The BN supreme council will meet tomorrow to discuss the issue in the hope of reaching a common stand.

The MCA central committee had on Friday decided against English being used to teach the two subjects in Chinese primary schools. Gerakan had made a similar stand earlier.

Dr Mahathir said he had repeatedly stressed the need for BN to collectively make a decision on the proposal to use English to teach the two subjects.

"I do not decide the outcome of discussions. In my speech to the group at the (Bukit Jalil) stadium (recently), I said it would be good if we could reach a decision which reflected our united stand," he said.

On whether the MCA's decision had forced the party into a corner, Dr Mahathir said: "I wouldn't say that because if I say that, then I would be ignoring the function of BN.

"I have avoided making a statement. People have asked me are you going to implement it? I said wait ...because I want to get the feel of it."

Dr Mahathir said the people knew that BN had no political axe to grind and that the coalition wanted to do it for the betterment of the nation.

"If Malaysians say it is not good, then we just don't do it. If they want us to do it, we will do it.

"So whatever it is, the decision should be reached within the council of BN."

Dr Mahathir said he had always emphasised that BN gave equal weightage to all its component parties, even smaller ones, that sat on the supreme council.

He said one of the things the world admired about Malaysia was how the different races could live in peace, and the reason for this, as had always been explained, was the concept of the BN.

"We are not going to assimilate people, we are not going to form a

single party, we are going to have parties representing different views, but in all things, we must agree before we decide on anything," he said.