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Mahathir-Education

NO NECESSITY TO TEACH OTHER SUBJECTS IN ENGLISH

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 28 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said there is no necessity to teach other subjects in school in English, other than what is being implemented for Mathematics and Science now.

"No, I don't think that there is necessity (to teach other subjects in English).

"It is very important that we keep our identity and our language," he said during an interview in the Asian Wall Street Journal programme, aired by CNBC TV, tonight.

He said this in response to a question whether he was hoping that English would be used in the teaching of other subjects too.

On the use of the English language in teaching Mathematics and Science in schools, Dr Mahathir said it was because of the new situation and needs due to the rapid change in new technology, particularly the information technology (IT).

Saying that he did not change his mind over the Malay-based education system with the re-introduction of English, he said that he had always told Malaysians to have a good command of English.

However, he said other views might have influenced people in opposing the implementation of teaching Maths and Science in English, and they had gone overboard in the sense that they had disregarded the importance of English.

"And now of course because of the new technology, IT in particular, command of English has become absolutely necessary. Otherwise, we cannot make any progress.

"So there is no harm in modifying or changing policy, an old policy, because of new situations," he said.

Dr Mahathir explained that the change of policy in the education system was made after discussion with Cabinet members.

"This is something that I did not do on my own. It is done with cooperation, after discussion with my colleagues and I don't want to leave problems behind. If there is anything that I can do to resolve problems then I will do (it)," he said.

Dr Mahathir has announced that he would retire from all party and government posts after the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) meeting here in October. He has named Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi as his successor.

Dr Mahathir fielded questions on a range of subjects including his retirement, Islam and his hopes for the upcoming Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) Summit next month and the OIC summit, as well as topics on political, security and international spheres.

On his retirement, the Prime Minister said he had agreed to stay a little longer on two conditions, that he would be allowed to retire after the OIC meeting and would be given two months holiday after the NAM summit.

"Of course the Non-Aligned Movement and OIC meeting are the two things that I've agreed on during my time and some foreign leaders are expecting me to be there," he said.

On a question that Abdullah should be given a fresh mandate to begin his premiership, he said: "Well, one of the things I've said recently was that all those people who were with me should at least offer to resign or should actually resign. They may be re-appointed by the new leadership... it's good to have the new leader pick his own team."

On whether he was concerned that there would be an absence of what people called strong leaders in Asia, Dr Mahathir said he did not think and even assume that he was a strong leader.

"I don't look at myself as a strong leader. I look at myself as a person who has been given the responsibility and I try to carry out my responsibility as best I can," he said.

Dr Mahathir, who has been Prime Minister for 22 years, said he had been in politics for a long time and that it was time for him to retire.

On what was his achievement, he said: "Well, I can say that I'm satisfied with what I've done and what I have not achieved is to change the mindset of my own people."

However, he said he was glad that to a certain extent he had succeeded but not to the degree he had hoped for.

On what he planned to do after retiring, the longest serving leader in Asia said he would take a rest and record some of his experiences which could be useful for researchers in the future.

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