

Policy on Maths and Science in English stays

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THE Government will not change its policy of teaching Mathematics and Science in the English language, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said in Lesotho's capital Maseru yesterday.

Asked about the issue which has been debated following Gerakan deputy president Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon's insistence that the party wanted a review of this policy, the Prime Minister said:

"The policy remains. There's no plan to change it."

Koh, who is also Penang Chief Minister, said the Gerakan was of the opinion that both subjects be taught in the mother tongue of pupils from Standard One to Three.

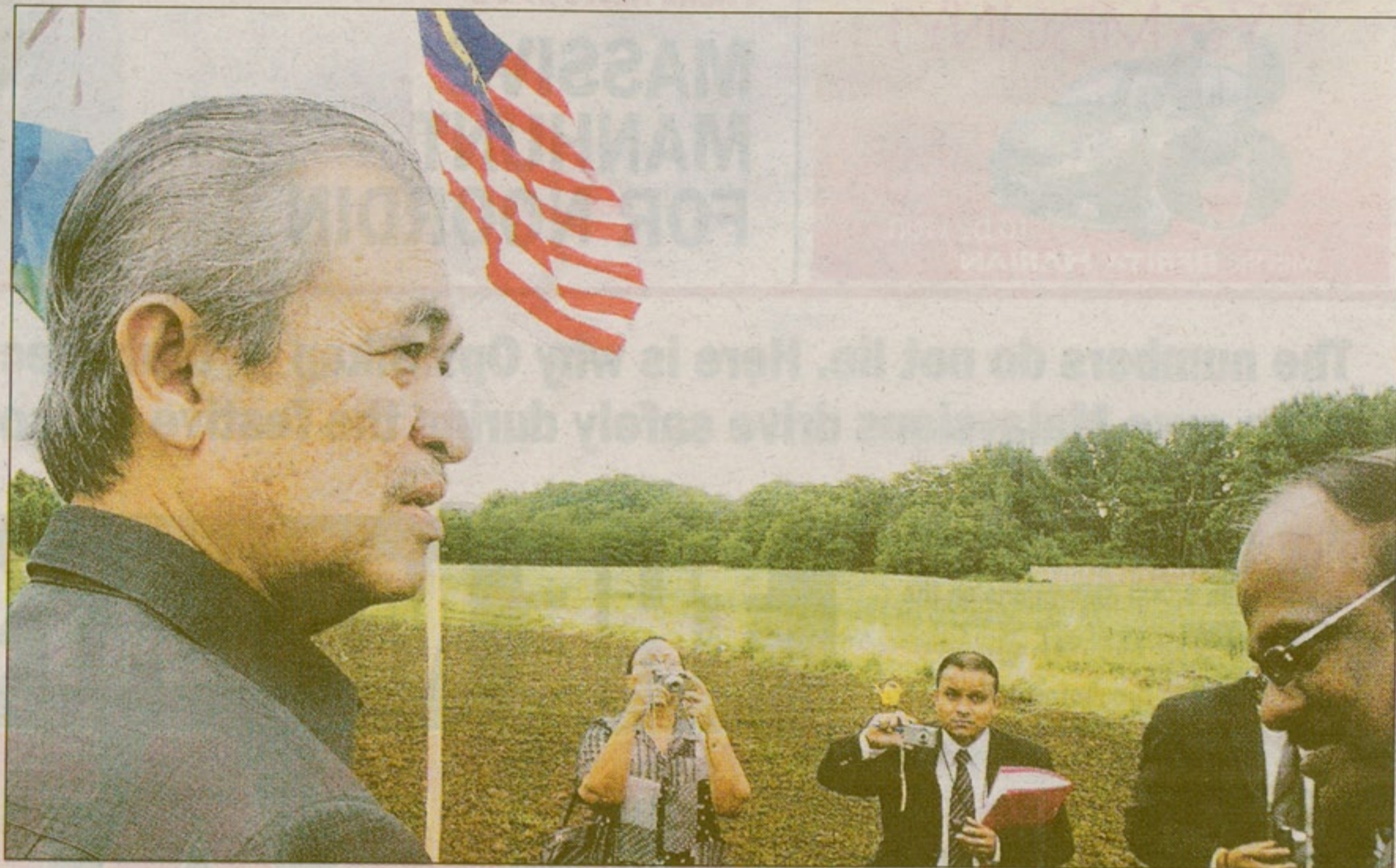
His argument was that they would find it easier to learn in their mother tongue.

Koh's comments were widely criticised, including by Education Minister Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein.

Abdullah, who is attending the Southern African International Dialogue here, said that the Government was willing to review the implementation process to overcome any weaknesses.

He said Hishammuddin's statement yesterday reflected the Government's position.

Hishammuddin slammed Koh for wanting Mathematics and Science to be taught in the mother-tongue in Chinese and Tamil pri-



GOING TO THE GROUND: Abdullah at a cotton plantation managed by a Malaysian company on Thursday after attending the international dialogue on Southern Africa.

mary schools.

He described the statement as irresponsible, unrealistic and inconsistent.

"Koh should have known better as the decision to have both the subjects taught in English was taken by the Barisan Nasional (BN) supreme council, of which Koh is a member. He was there when the decision was made... I was not there. (Hishammuddin is not a member of the BN supreme council.)

"Having both subjects in English has been a policy for the past three years and reverting to the mother tongue will have adverse effects on the pupils ... we can't

review it," Hishammuddin had said.

Umno leaders in the BN are particularly unhappy with Koh because when the policy was about to be introduced, the party faced great resistance from Malay educationists and academics.

Umno, however, stood its ground, saying that given the universal nature of the English language, Malaysians of all races would benefit by improving their knowledge if they were educated in English in these subjects.

An Umno leader pointed out that Koh's arguments were flawed because the older generation of Malaysians were all

taught Mathematics and Science in the English language and they excelled.

Similarly, the leader said, in predominantly Chinese-populated Singapore, English was also the language of education for all subjects and this did not in any way deter students from excelling in Mathematics and Science.

Koh was quoted yesterday as saying that he had been "misunderstood".

"Perhaps I did not make my views clear or was misunderstood. I do not want to be engaged in an open debate about this issue anymore and will only discuss it within the Government and BN."