

PM defends programme

'Debate on use of English may cause confusion'

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MASERU (Lesotho): Stop the debates over the use of English in the teaching of Science and Mathematics in primary schools, Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi advised.

It could lead to more confusion, the Prime Minister said when commenting on a suggestion by Gerakan deputy president Tan Sri Koh Tsu Koon that these subjects be taught in the pupils' mother tongue rather than in English.

Abdullah said the issue concerning the use of English in the teaching of Science and Mathematics should not be prolonged and debated.

The more it was discussed the more

likely for incorrect information to be reported on the matter, he told a press conference at the Global 2005 Smart Partnership International Dialogue here yesterday.

"This issue is complex and the Education Ministry is aware of its seriousness," Abdullah said, adding that Education Minister Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein had issued a statement to defend the use of English.

The Prime Minister noted, however, that Dr Koh had not disputed the use of English but had only questioned how long the policy would be in place.

Abdullah said he would agree with the statement if it was meant to highlight weaknesses in the way the policy had been implemented.

"We need to remedy whatever shortcomings and correct weaknesses in its implementation," he said, adding that the policy was supposed to be reviewed at the end of three years and this matter had to be looked into.

It has to be decided whether three years was enough or more time had to be given to the programme to determine its effectiveness, he said.

On the reported death of suspected terrorist Dr Azahari Husin, Abdullah said he was waiting for an official report from the Indonesian authorities.

He hoped the authorities would also carry out a DNA test to verify the death of Dr Azahari, reported to be one of three men killed in a blast during a

police ambush in Malang, in south Java, on Wednesday.

He said the Malaysian Embassy would help Dr Azahari's family to bring back his remains to Malaysia.

On the candidate for the impending by-election in Pengkalan Pasir, Kelantan, Abdullah said the Umno management committee would vet the list of potential candidates before deciding on the Barisan Nasional candidate.

The Election Commission has fixed nomination for Nov 27, with polling on Dec 6.

On the request by the National Union of the Teaching Profession for a five-day work week, Abdullah said the Education Ministry was studying the proposal.