

Decision on khat for Year 4 pupils stays, says Dr M

MELAKA: The decision to introduce the art of khat (a form of Malay-Arabic calligraphy) as part of the Bahasa Melayu subject for Year Four pupils from next year is final.

Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the government had never barred other races from preserving the written script of their mother tongues, making Malaysia quite special.

"The Chinese written script is not allowed in other countries, including the Philippines, Indonesia and Thailand.

"It is something which is special in Malaysia, which did not bar the written script of the communities."

Dr Mahathir said it was not right that there were certain quarters in DAP and organisations that were against the art of khat.

"The art of khat calligraphy is one which is considered to be a fine art and I think that we should continue with it."

Dr Mahathir said this in a dialogue with undergraduates at the Semarak Merdeka Town Hall programme here yesterday.

His response received a roaring reception from the 2,000 people present at the programme, which was moderated by state Industry, Trade and Investment Committee chairman Datuk Mohd Rafiq Naizamohideen.

On Friday, the Education Ministry said the introduction of khat as part of the Bahasa Melayu subject for Year Four pupils would be done next year as planned.

Dr Mahathir was commenting on the remarks made by DAP grassroots leaders, including a number of its assemblymen, who opposed the move.

He said without politics, the nation would not have achieved its independence.

This was despite the view of certain quarters who feel that politics is dirty.

Dr Mahathir said politics in truth had benefited the people and country, including serving as a catalyst to past leaders to liberate the nation from occupation.

"What is wrong is not the politics, but the actions of the politicians.

"When they are in power, they abuse power, steal money, prac-

tise corruption and suppress others," he said.

Commenting on the hardships that former leaders went through to gain the nation's independence, Dr Mahathir said the younger generation should commemorate and appreciate their sacrifices, which thwarted the British effort to establish the Malayan Union in Malaya.

"The unification of the people succeeded in thwarting the British plan, political consciousness united the people until they rose to demand independence in 1957," he said.