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Weaknesses in national schools to be rectified

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KUALA LUMPUR, Wed. - Shortcomings in national schools will be rectified in efforts to improve the quality of education, Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak said today.

The Education Minister said two areas that needed to be studied were the teaching of mathematics and science.

In welcoming the Prime Minister's statement Monday on Chinese schools, Najib said the achievements of Chinese schools in mathematics and science were better than national schools and the reason for this should be studied.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had in Jitra urged teachers and Education Ministry officials to look into reasons why many Malay parents lacked confidence in national schools, preferring to send their children to Chinese schools and former missionary schools instead.

"The support of parents in the Chinese community for education is high, Chinese schools receive good local support and seriousness is given to education, for example in terms of additional classes after school," Najib told reporters after his ministry's weekly post-cabinet meeting.

"This is positive and constructive criticism so that we intensify our spirit of struggle to have better success in the future," he added.

Najib said parents who send their children to Chinese schools do so due to various reasons.

One was to pick up the Chinese language and another was to acquire better mathematical knowledge as these schools achieved better results in the subject.

A third, Najib said, was for economic reasons.

"The environment created due to the background of the children and their parents is more focussed on commercial aspects as many are from families linked to business.

"So the importance of mathematics is very much stressed in their homes and that contributes to their better results in the subject," he said.

Najib said the country's education system allowed parents the opportunity to choose whatever school was suitable for their children.

He said there were national schools that had excellent achievements with some of them getting 100 per cent Grade One passes in the Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia examination.

"As the number of our national schools is high, there are several categories of achievements. There are those who have excellent achievements, some have average results and there are those which will continue efforts to achieve better results," the Minister said.

He said while there were excellent government schools, there were also schools where the attitude of "certain people" in those schools lowered achievements. Referring to an Aug 11 report in Berita Harian on the criteria for choosing books for the compulsory Malay Literature component in the Bahasa Melayu subject, Najib said after scrutiny it was found that there was no wrong-doing or abuse of power in the selection of books.

He said the selection by the valuation and selection committee was fair and honest and the committee members were graduate teachers, university lecturers, lecturers at teachers' colleges, literature critics, writers and representatives of GAPENA (National Writers Association).

On a newspaper report about a primary school headmistress meting out punishment on pupils for not settling their computer class fee, Najib said

the ministry was waiting for a report.
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