

Najib: Govt to focus on language skills

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DEFENCE Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak (*pix*) said a review of the education system will result in the government putting more emphasis on language classes in national schools, including Mandarin.

Such a move, he told *Sin Chew* in an interview, will help alleviate fears of Chinese parents that their children will not be able to study their mother tongue in national schools.

This will also help address the racial imbalance in Chinese schools because enrolment is restricted to one race.

Najib, who is also Umno vice-president, said this will not help build unity.

He said this is why Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad saw the need to set up a committee to review the education system.

Najib said Chinese and national schools should have a more balanced system and not let 90% of its students come from one race only.

In the past the government had placed the importance on languages in primary schools, but it was unable to implement the plans due to shortage of teachers, he said.

But the time is now ripe for the implementation of that policy, Najib said.

Sin Chew said Najib, who is also a former education minister, criticised Dong Jiao Zong for refusing to change with the times.

If the educationists refuse to make progress with the times, they will be abandoned by the Chinese community, he said.

Umno and the rest of the world have changed with the times, only Dong Jiao Zong has refused to do so, he said.

"They are unable to reflect the thinking of a new era to fulfil the needs of the country," he said.

He described the leaders of Dong Jiao Zong as remnants of the past who are trying to impose their outdated views.

Najib also said the teaching of science and mathematics in English will not erode the support of the Chinese community for Barisan Nasional.

"We will face those who oppose the policy, like Dong Jiao Zong, bravely," he said.

He also said the MCA's power struggle will not affect the Chinese community's support for BN in the next election.

"The Chinese who support BN will vote for the coalition, and not a single

political party," Najib said.

However, Umno has always regarded MCA as its closest partner and hopes that the problems in the party will not have a negative impact on the BN in the next election.

Najib also felt very happy with the support of the Chinese community for national service.

He rejected views that national service is being used to muster support from young people for the BN.