

Muhyiddin suggests possible solutions to Interlok row
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Additional footnotes, glossaries and teaching guidelines are possible solutions to the controversial textbook novel 'Interlok', said Deputy Prime Minister and Education Minister Muhyiddin Yassin.

However the final decision, including whether the textbook will be removed from the Form Five Malay literature syllabus, has yet to be made.

According to Muhyiddin, the discussion on Tuesday among Education Ministry, MIC and other organisations, reached a consensus that 'Interlok' has no intention of disparaging the Indian community.

"This is a novel that discusses national unity and integration among races, which is in line with the 1Malaysia concept. It's just that there are worries from MIC and certain groups from the Indian community over a few words used in the novel," he added.

"We (Education Ministry) have made some suggestions and the cabinet asked us to discuss with MIC further so that we have a clearer solution to the issue, including preparing glossaries or footnotes and teaching guidelines."

He said that more discussions will be held with interested parties to find a satisfactory solution to the controversy.

"The decision will not be long (in coming)," Muhyiddin told reporters during a press conference at Tenang today.

The discussion on Tuesday was attended by 22 representatives from various organisations, including six representatives from MIC. It was chaired by Deputy Education Minister Dr Mohd Puad Zarkashi.

The cabinet was subsequently briefed by Muhyiddin regarding the outcome of the discussion and the ministry was instructed to hold more discussions with the stakeholders.

'Build school or risk losing'

Meanwhile Muhyiddin (left) today officiated the groundbreaking ceremony of a Labis religious school's RM2.4 million new building extension, funded by the Johor state government.

Johor Mentri Besar Abdul Ghani Othman announced that the state government had allocated RM280 million to build another 121 new religious schools in the state from October last year to September this year.

However when asked about the demands by Johor NGOs to build an independent Chinese high school in Segamat, Muhyiddin said that he has not received any such proposal.

When reporters pressed further that the NGOs had submitted a memorandum to Prime

Minister Najib Abdul Razak earlier this week on the proposal, the education minister passed the buck to the PM.

"Never mind, then we wait for the prime minister's decision."

The NGOs have been campaigning since the 1980s for the revival of the Seg Hwa independent Chinese high school or the establishment of another new independent school in Segamat, a town 30 km north of Labis,.

They warned that BN may repeat history when in the 1990 general election it lost the Jementah and Labis state seats (as they were called then) for the first time in history, because their proposal was rejected by the BN government then.

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