

Muhyiddin, Interlok neither a political nor racial issue
Malaysiakini.com
April 1, 2011

Civil society groups and other concerned individuals should not be taken in by Education Minister Muhyiddin Yassin's statement that the Interlok issue has been resolved.

In fact, not only is it not resolved but compliance will mean that 'Interlok' could well be extended from its present Zone 2 (Klang Valley) coverage thereafter to Zone 1, Zone 3 and Zone 4 in the rest of the country.

Interlok is a beach head for the Little Napoleons and other Ketuanan bureaucrats to impose their agenda of educational and cultural seppuku on a young captive audience.

Success in imposing Interlok will only encourage these ideologues to move further upstream and inject their indoctrination into the syllabus for the younger forms, and eventually in the primary school curriculum. The history and moral subjects have already been tampered with. Currently the focus is on language and literature. What will be next?

Muhyiddin's statement that nobody should politicize or exploit the issue by using NGOs is made in wilful ignorance. The fact is these organisations have been in the forefront of the campaign from the outset.

It is not difficult for the minister to determine the chronology of events with regard to the emergence and growth of public (but hardly any political) consciousness, concern and agitation on the book.

A quick glance at news and reports from the websites will show that civil society organisations such as NIAT, Hartal MSM, and the Centre for Policy Initiatives have provided analysis and public feedback for several months now on the unsuitability of Interlok.

The NGO concern is in sharp contrast to the lack of criticism on the book by public figures. Political parties from both Barisan Nasional and the opposition have been slow or reluctant to discuss the appropriateness of the book as a school text.

While the education minister and his MCA deputy – the career politicians – have been adamant on its retention, why have the educationists and other Education Ministry officials been largely silent?

In NGOs voicing our concerns on key issues affecting our nation, we do not have any political affiliation or political axe to grind. Neither are we racially motivated because Malay and non-Malay, Muslim and non-Muslim groups are equally concerned as to why Interlok is being retained when it is clearly in contravention of the Education Ministry and the Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka's own guidelines on textbook and literary work.

The Minister should welcome our feedback and seek to engage with us rather than try to intimidate us.

Giving up on the campaign to have the novel discontinued as a compulsory SPM reading is the wrong message to send. Capitulating to the Ministry's insistence will signal that we do not care for our education system to play a positive role in building social cohesion as is

implicit in the 1Malaysia slogan.

NGOs and most particularly the parents should continue with even greater urgency and commitment to have Interlok removed from the classroom. The government has might on its side but might does not make it right.

Copyright © 1999-2007 Mkini Dotcom Sdn. Bhd.

Source : <http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/160308>