

Reconsider PPSMI decision, gov't told
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MIC president G Palanivel has urged the government today to explore other avenues for the teaching of science and mathematics in schools, including a bilingual approach.

"We have consider the ongoing public reaction on this issue," he said, and expressed fears of a backlash from angry parents.

He had received a memorandum from a group of parents, he said, who were concerned about the abolition of the Teaching of Science and Mathematics in English (PPSMI) from next year.

Palanivel, who is also a minister in the Prime Minister's Department, urged the Education Ministry to listen to suggestions from parent-teacher associations, parents and concerned NGOs.

"It is not too late. We can still reconsider the decision (to abolish the use of English for the two subjects)," he said.

Meanwhile, MCA president Chua Soi Lek has proposed that English Literature be introduced as a compulsory subject to improve the standard of English among students.

He added that retired teachers could be hired for the purpose, and a special allowance should be given to English Literature teachers.

PPSMI was introduced in 2003 to improve students' mastery in English.

However, it met with stiff resistance from nationalists, Bahasa Malaysia language activists, along with Chinese and Tamil education groups, including a mass protest involving 10,000 people in Kuala Lumpur.

The reversal of the policy was announced in 2009, citing dropping science and mathematics scores, and incompetent teachers.

Ministry finding disputed

English teaching hours are to be increased to compensate for the policy reversal.

However, some groups have urged the government to retain the PPSMI as an option, saying that science and mathematics are best taught in their lingua franca and that this was popular with parents.

One of the PPSMI lobby groups, Parent Action Group for Education, has disputed the Education Ministry's finding on poor performance, saying that the scores of students in these two subjects have actually improved.

Education Minister Muhyiddin Yassin countered that giving schools the option would complicate planning.

His deputy, Mohd Puah Zakarshi, criticised the lobby groups, saying their research was not thorough enough.