

## **1,000 Malaccans rally for teaching in English**

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**by Elissa Helmy**

About 1,000 parents held a peaceful gathering in Malacca this morning to press for the continuation of the policy of teaching science and mathematics in English (PPSMI).

The multi-ethnic gathering at the grounds of the Stadium Tun Fatimah in Bukit Serindit kicked off at 8am.

After a short speech by event organiser Mak Chee Kin, chairperson of the Malacca Action Group for Parents in Education (Magpie), the participants walked around the Bukit Serindit park for 25 minutes to spread their message.

The early morning shower did not dampened the enthusiam of the protesters, many of whom came prepared with umbrellas.

Mak said those at the gathering felt that the government should continue with the PPSMI and not merely extend it to 2021, after which the teaching language would revert to Bahasa Malaysia.

“We are grateful to the government, in particular Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak and Deputy Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin for delaying the change to Bahasa Malaysia for a few more years.

“We are not anti-government, nor are we anti-Bahasa Malaysia, we only want what is best for our kids,” said Mak.

“As you can see the turnout of parents here is most encouraging, even with the heavy rain they have turned up (to lend their support).

He said their message was the government should do what was best for the children.

The walk concluded at 8.40am without incident or interference from the authorities.

“We thank the police for allowing us the opportunity to hold this peaceful gathering,” said Mak.

'Win win solution'

Mak said he was happy that even if temporary, the government had found a “win win” solution in allowing the option of either languages as the teaching medium.

“Magpie is also glad that with the explanation given by the Education director-general, the choice whether to be in English or BM would be left entirely to the parents and the school head would act according to the wish of the parents.

“Though it may have some logictics problems initially, Magpie feels that this is the most logical and best solution available because all parents would be given the choice to choose the medium that they want for their children as stated in the Education Act,1996,” he said.

“The issue of the choice of PPSMI is actually not an issue of race or patriotism nor urban or rural, but an

issue of equipping our children with all the necessary tools in this globalise and ever changing world of technology,” said Mak.

He called on the six Malacca schools whose PTAs (parents and teachers association) had passed resolutions to opt for English to do so unhindered.

PPSMI has been a political hot potato that has seen the government, in particular DPM and Education Minister Muhyiddin, being criticised for flip-flopping on his stand.

Advocates for continuing the teaching language in English are concerned with the dire standard of the language in the schools and with graduates' inability to compete in the job market.

Opponents of the policy, meanwhile, see the policy as a challenge to the status of the national language, and see the issue as one that appeals to the Malay electorate or the rural voters.

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