

**DPM: Dong Zong's sidelining claim 'a big lie'**

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Deputy Prime Minister and Education Minister Muhyiddin Yassin today labelled the teacher shortage issue raised by Chinese education rights group Dong Zong as a "big lie".

NONEHe also condemned as "uncivilised" the action of throwing things at his deputy minister Wee Ka Siong during a protest rally organised by Dong Zong last month at Kajang.

According to the national news agency, Bernama, Muhyiddin, told some 500 teachers from vernacular schools during a meeting today at Shah Alam, that the issue is not exclusive to Chinese schools.

He said national schools are also facing the problem of insufficient English language teachers.

"It is not that the ministry allows the teacher shortage problem to continue, but because it takes time to fill the vacancies left by retired teachers," he was quoted as saying.

Annually there are some 20,000 teachers who become pregnant which also contributes to the problem, he explained.

All schools enjoy same standard

Muhyiddin (below) also argued that out of the 1,700 vacancies in Chinese schools, more than 1,400 have been filled with temporary teachers.

NONEHence ,he said, those who accuse the government of marginalising Chinese and Tamil schools are being most irresponsible.

He stressed that vernacular schools are part of the national education system, and have achieved the same quality as national schools.

"We have never given different treatment just because it is Chinese or Mandarin school, it is the perception of certain quarters ,including the opposition...

"There are people who want to confuse us because the general election is near," he said.

Repeating the recent statement made by Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak, Muhyiddin pointed out that Najib, during his tenure as education minister in 1996, had amended the education act to recognise the status of vernacular schools.

The programme was attended by top BN leaders, including Selangor BN deputy chief Noh Omar, Selangor MCA chief Donald Lim, Selangor BN coordinator Mohd Zin Mohamed and PPP president M Kayveas.

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