

'Pakatan will defend vernacular schools in court'

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By Hazlan Zakaria

Pakatan Rakyat is prepared to defend the existence of vernacular schools in court, for such education is protected under the federal constitution, DAP secretary-general Lim Guan Eng said today.

"Mother tongue education and vernacular schools are protected under Article 152(1)(a) and (b) of the federal constitution.

penang pakatan convention 090313 lim guan eng"For this reason, Pakatan and DAP are ready to fight legally in courts and seek support from all Malaysians - Malays, Chinese, Indians, Iban and Kadazan - to protect Chinese and Tamil vernacular schools from being abolished by Umno supporters like (UiTM pro-chancellor) Abdul Rahman Arshad," Lim said in a press statement today.

Rahman at a forum on Sunday called for the abolition of Chinese and Tamil vernacular schools in favour of a single stream school using the Malay language as a means to foster national unity.

"Rahman dares to call for the abolition of Chinese and Tamil vernacular schools because with assured Umno support behind him, he knows he will neither be sacked as pro-chancellor of Universiti Teknologi Mara (UiTM) nor be charged for making such seditious remarks.

"His call for the abolition of Chinese and Tamil vernacular schools in favour of a single stream school is seditious. A, MP from the BN, Mark Koding, was even convicted of sedition in 1982 for making the very same suggestion in Parliament in 1978," Lim said.

He noted that newly-minted Kedah Menteri Besar Mukhriz Mahathir had made a similar suggestion in 2008 and Lim challenged Mukhriz to declare his stance this time.

'Don't make vernacular schools scapegoat'

He said vernacular schools should not be targeted simply because there was a Chinese voters swing against the ruling coalition.

"Why were vernacular schools not blamed when the Chinese community saved BN

government from defeat in the 1999 general election, and when they voted for BN in the 1995 and 2004 general elections?

"BN and Umno continue to insult the voters by claiming that Pakatan's victory in the 13th general elections is due to a 'Chinese tsunami' and ignored the huge numbers of Malays, Indians, Kadazans and Iban who made up the 51 percent popular vote majority for Pakatan," he said.

NONEMeanwhile, MCA Youth education bureau chief Chong Sin Woon (left) said the notion that vernacular schools fostered disunity was a fallacy.

"Learning several languages to be multi-lingual is a global trend. People who view mother-tongue education as belonging to only that particular community are clearly out of touch with modern times," Chong said.

Chong called on the BN to thoroughly review its losses in the 13th general election instead of pinning blame on a particular community, such as the threat from former Court of Appeal judge Mohd Noor Abdullah to the Chinese of a backlash for their "betrayal" of the ruling coalition.

MCA veteran Lim Si Cheng similarly condemned Mohd Noor's statement and urged rationality and moderation.

"When voters, inclusive of Malay voters, select any one of the three parties in the Pakatan pact consisting of PAS, PKR and DAP on the ballot slip, can this be argued as a "betrayal" against the Malays?

"Therefore, the so-called 'Chinese betraying Malays' argument holds no merit at all," Lim said.

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