

MP criticises Mahathir's U-turn on teaching of English

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PARLIAMENT An opposition MP took a swipe at former premier Dr Mahathir Mohamad when criticising the frequent change to the Education Ministry's name.

parliament briefing 030408 johari abdulJohari Abdul (PKR-Sungai Petani, left) said that, similar to the implementation of the teaching of Mathematics and Science in English (PPSMI), the changes to the ministry's name also seem to lack proper planning.

PPSMI, which was Mahathir's brainchild, was introduced in 2003 and revoked in 2011.

Johari said Mahathir, in the early days, wanted the teaching of English abolished but later introduced PPSMI to bolster students' comprehension of the English language.

"The person responsible for destroying the English language is the same person who later implemented the PPSMI," he claimed when debating the Supplementary Budget Bill for the ministry in the Dewan Rakyat today.

Johari said he remembers how during the time of education minister Mohd Khir Johari, there were two streams - one English and the other Malay.

"It was very democratic and the parents could choose which stream they wanted their children to study in. Then came Mahathir.

"Perhaps he thought that the spirit of the Malays must be fortified, and that English was the language of the colonial masters. So he closed down the English stream, and these students and teachers were told to learn and teach in Malay without any proper research."

Johari also noted that the Education Ministry's name had been changed three times.

"First it was called Kementerian Pendidikan. Then when former education minister (Anwar Ibrahim) was sacked in 1998, the government promptly changed the name to Kementerian Pelajaran. There was no reason for this and no research was done," he said.

Anwar, who was education minister from 1986 to 1990, had changed the ministry's name from Kementerian Pelajaran to Kementerian Pendidikan.

NONEJohari said the ministry was later split into two portfolios during the tenure of prime minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi (right), with one covering higher education.

"But now, its has been combined again, and the name has been changed to Kementerian Pendidikan," he added.

"... These changes seem to follow the sentiments of the leaders, the desire to show that they are greater than the minister before them."

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