

Teachers yawn, nod and sleep at DPM's speech

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PMTG PAUH It might be due to the rainy weather in Permatang Pauh or it might be due to the time the event was held which was at 3pm, but Deputy Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin had a hard time getting a response from a teachers' gathering there today.

Muhyiddin, delivering his speech to some 500 educationists at the Pulau Pinang UiTM campus, had to prompt them to clap at least four times during his 40-minute speech.

Observation by journalists found that some of the teachers were either sleeping or listening to Muhyiddin's speech with bored looks on their faces.

The deputy prime minister started off his speech by commenting on the country's poverty rate which had been reduced to a low level.

"Even if there are those who are poor, they are the hardcore poor and this percentage does not reach two percent," he said.

When the audience did not clap for this, he responded: "It's okay if you don't clap, biasalah tu (that's normal)".

He then went on to comment on the government's e-Kasih system which gauges the poverty level in the country.

"The system has been recognised by the United Nations as the best system in the world to gauge the poverty level," he announced.

Realising that the audience did not clap again, he said: "Ah... please clap lah. I'm speaking to intelligent people [...] I'm not lying".

Realising his gaffe, he then said: "I don't lie to others too. It's just that with teachers, I have to speak the truth," he said, eliciting laughter from the audience.

'More pay' gets bigger clap

Towards the end of his speech, he told the audience he could speak for an additional two hours and this was greeted by nervous laughter from the crowd.

"Maybe you are already bored. Well, I don't have to campaign (for the by-election) because I can see that those in front of me can be trusted to give their support to Barisan Nasional's candidate," he said.

He then added that government servants had to be loyal to the government of the day.

"And the government of the day today is Barisan Nasional. It's okay if you don't clap," he said again to the half-hearted applause that rippled weakly amongst those present.

Muhyiddin managed to garner the most spirited response when he said he believed teachers with higher qualifications deserved a higher remuneration.

"I prefer that teachers further their studies to Masters and Ph.D levels. Those who have higher qualifications should be given a higher remuneration, that's what I believe," he said to hearty clapping.

The deputy prime minister was in town to campaign for Suhaimi Sabudin, BN's candidate for the parliamentary by-election on May 7. The other three candidates are Pakatan Rakyat's Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail, PRM's Azman Shah Othman and independent Salleh Isahak.

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