

BN's empty Bagan Pinang election promise
Malaysiakini.com
July 26, 2010

We are appalled that the six-acre school land allocated to SRJK(T) Sungai Salak, Lukut during the Bagan Pinang by election is now forced to be shared with district education department. The election promise was made in October 2009, but as soon as the by election was over, the Education Ministry sent a letter informing the Parent-Teacher Association that the education department would have to three-acres from that piece of land.

This is clearly a breach of trust - all election promises must be implemented. We can't help but deem that it was a trick to fish for votes during the by-election. The PTA claimed that they had spoken to Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak's aide and they then received the land. We urge the PM to give an explanation on this.

The SJK(T) Sungai Salak located at the Ladang Sungai Salak was closed in 2002 when the plantation company ended its operations. As the government failed to provide any alternative location, the school was forced to seek refuge in the premises of a nearby Tamil school, SJK(T) Springhill from 2002 until 2007.

In 2007, due to space constraints, the school faced its second eviction. Afraid of a permanent closure of the school, the determined PIBG was able to obtain a consent from the Ministry of Education to use a shop lot in Lukut town pending land allocation by the state government.

The school was assisted by the Tamil Foundation to raise funds for the renovation costs of the shop lot. The PIBG raised funds to support rental and other costs involved for the ordinary operations.

During the Bagan Pinang by-election, the Barisan Nasional leaders made an open promise that the SJK(T) Sungai Salak will get a new school with six acres of land. The news made headlines in the Tamil dailies and much of BN's election campaign was centred on its ability to offer land for the SJK(T) Sungai Salak.

After the election, the PIBG was informed that their six acres was in fact to be taken away from the previous allotment of six acres for another Tamil school, SJK(T) Kem Askar Melayu.

It is pity that SJK(T) Kem Askar Melayu lost its allotted land of six acres and SJK(T) Sungai Salak which was promised the said six acres was shortchanged by three acres.

There is no sufficient explanation as to why the Tamil schools that cater for mainly the poor children of the Indian community are dealt with in this manner. Indeed, both schools deserve government land, this is not a 'two choices, choose one' option.

We consider this a most irresponsible way of running education where mother tongue schools have been facing discrimination since independence even though they are part of the national educational system. The government's refusal to provide full aid causes miserable infrastructure conditions in vernacular schools whereby students are compelled to study in a non-conducive environment. Obviously, this deprives the children of their right to equal education resources.

The government must be fair in allocating education resources in terms of school buildings, provision of infrastructural support and qualified teachers as well as balanced financial allocations for both national and national-type schools.

Whether the school is on government or on private land, the categorisation of 'fully-aided' and 'partly-aided' is unconstitutional and discriminative. The PM should abolish such a practice if he is truly upholding the spirit of '1Malaysia' and 'People First'. The '1Malaysia' slogan will remain as rhetoric if mother tongue schools continue to be discriminated against and treated as 'stepchildren' by the Education

Ministry.

With that principle, we also urge the government to speed up the process of building Chinese vernacular schools to fulfill the promise made before 2008 general election and this include the SRJK(C) Tun Tan Siew Sin.

We regret that even though the residents of Putra Heights had submitted a strong petition of 1,200 signatures to education ministry in January 2009, this has just fallen on deaf ears.

The writers are LLG Cultural Development Centre president and Tamil Foundation advisor respectively.

Copyright © 1999-2007 Mkini Dotcom Sdn. Bhd.

Source : <http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/138377>