

**DAP demands review on History subject**  
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Opposition parliamentarian Tony Pua urged the government to do a comprehensive study on the Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM)'s History syllabus before making it a "must pass" subject beginning 2013.

The Petaling Jaya Utara DAP parliamentarian raised concerns that the move could be an underhand tactic by the government to revamp the syllabus to emphasise Malay rights provisions and conveniently neglecting others.

"The call to make History a compulsory subject came totally out of the blue and stands in stark contrast against the country's past policies to focus on science and mathematics to promote industry as well as to ensure employment," said Pua (*right*).

Pua was referring to Deputy Prime Minister and Education Minister Muhyiddin Yassin's statement recently for History to be made a must pass subject for SPM.

"He (Muhyiddin) also said the Education Ministry would also make improvements to the subject, with emphasis on enhancing the understanding of the constitution so as to enlighten students about the country's nation-building process.

"While we have no objections in principle to making the subject a compulsory pass, we are concerned with the proposal over two aspects," said Pua.

Suspecting that the deputy premier's announcement which was made during Umno's 61st general assembly could focus on a particular component of the constitution, Pua asked: "Given the announcement of the measure at an Umno national convention, the focus will naturally be on Article 153 and other related articles with regard to Malay rights.

"Will there be an equal emphasis on say, Article 8 which states that 'all persons are equal before the law and entitled to the equal protection of the law'?"

He added that students should be taught all aspects of the constitution including the Reid Commission responsible for drafting the constitution.

He urged Muhyiddin to set up an independent advisory and review body of all the necessary stakeholders including the country's historians to "overhaul" the subject before it is made compulsory.

"We fear that this new measure is a blatant attempt to indoctrinate our students with a narrow and biased interpretation of our federal constitution and our country's founding history.

Pua opined that individual authors should not be left to dictate the contents of the History textbooks and the task should be given to panel of experts.

Memorisation and regurgitation of facts

Another concern raised by Pua was the structure of the current education system, especially History, which is entirely based on "memorisation and regurgitation of facts" during exams.

"It does not at all involve critical thinking, analysis and interpretation... it will only make students incapable of independent thought," he said.

He reiterated that in order to improve on learning and thinking skills, the approach towards History should be overhauled, otherwise it would become a meaningless subject.

"Hence we call upon the ministry to resolve these critical issues first and not put the cart before the horse by making the subject compulsory without necessary critical reform," said Pua.

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