

Choosing vernacular schools: Not racial, just prudent
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The Umno MPs and senators think that Tamil and Chinese schools are the root cause for racial disunity in this country. They always argue and blame in Parliament that Indian and Chinese parents are not concerned about the national language and unity.

Many non-Malay MPs and community leaders have spoken and written about this issue many times. But these Umno leaders who are like the frog in the well who have never seen the sea, just cannot understand.

The Chinese and Indian parents send their children to Tamil/Chinese school because they are worried that the quality of teaching and learning in national schools is not comparable with that of the Tamil/Chinese schools.

Not only Chinese and Indian parents are concerned about this, but there are also some Malay parents who feel the same way. 70,000 Malay students study in Chinese schools.

There are lot of elite Malay students who study in international and private national schools. There are also Malay parents who have initiated organised campaigns for a bilingual schooling system. It shows that all is not too well in national schools.

The teaching and learning in Tamil and Chinese schools encourages and promotes the students to learn mathematics and science. They are given a lot of homework and school work.

The teachers in these schools are concerned about the welfare and performance of their students and the Indian and Chinese parents and also some Malay parents feel from their experience that the environment in the national school is not comparable with that of the Tamil and Chinese schools.

What are the actions being taken to increase the number of non-Malay students in national schools?

If a product is good for sure it can attract a lot of customers. If the customers don't come, we must re-examine and improve our product and not find fault with the customers. That is the way we can achieve success.

In addition, from the parent's experience, national schools are not serious about teaching POL (People's Own Language). Usually in national schools, POL is taught after school sessions or on Saturday.

This shows that national schools are not serious about the teaching of the Tamil and Chinese languages and the parents are worried that if they send their children to national schools, their mother tongue is lost.

In Singapore, there are no Tamil/Chinese schools. But the students in that country can speak and write their mother tongue well. This is because their national schools takes this task seriously and makes the learning of vernacular language compulsory to all students in their national schools.

The Singapore government has proven that it is serious about the learning of vernacular language in the national schools. Therefore, no one requests for Tamil/Chinese schools.

But in Malaysia, the parents of Indian and Chinese students do not trust the government because for the last 50 years, they have not shown any sincere effort in teaching the vernacular language in national schools.

I ask the minister of education, are there any plans to improve the teaching of vernacular language in national schools?

Moreover, the national schools looks more like religious schools. This is also one of the reasons why Indian and Chinese parents refuse to send their children to study in national schools.

I call upon the minister of education to address this suspicion and doubt of Malay, Chinese, and Indian parents and reveal the actions to be taken to improve the quality of teaching and learning in national schools, to be better than that of the Chinese and Tamil schools.

The following activities in national schools drive away non-Malay children from national schools:

1. Reciting prayers during morning assembly (while ignoring the non-Muslims). The headmaster should remind the non-Muslim students to pray to their own God. Do not ignore them. Do unto others what you want others to do to you.
2. There are lot of signboards written in Jawi surrounding the school, especially in the rural area. Does the headmaster expect the non-Malay children to read these signboards?
3. There are a lot of prayers, and the teachers treat them as though they do not exist in the school. When the Muslims pray, why not remind the non-Muslims to pray to their own God rather than ignore?
4. The teachers entering classes only acknowledge and greet the Muslim students and start teaching straight away without greeting the non-Muslim students, as if they don't exist in the class.
5. During festivals or religious celebrations, there are only programs for Muslims but none for non-Muslims students.
6. When quoting or showing examples, the teachers just quote from Muslim scriptures or Islamic books but do not even mention about the non-Muslim leaders. The contributions of non-Muslim leaders in the field of politics, social science, and so on are ignored. Maybe the teachers are not knowledgeable in this area, but they should (arm themselves with such knowledge) if they want the Indian and Chinese parents to send their children to national schools.
7. During the JQAF (Jawi, Quran, Arabic and Fardhu 'Ain) sessions, non-Muslim students go to QI class and they are allowed to do their own work because the teachers don't know what the syllabus in QI entails.
8. Name tags of the teachers are also in Jawi. How can the non-Muslim students read Jawi?
9. Canteens: there are non-Muslim students who don't eat beef or are vegetarian. There are

no tags that indicate what kind of meat is being served. The schools do not seem bothered about the sensitivities of other races.

10. The numbers of non-Muslim teachers are very minimal in the national schools. The national schools are short of capable teachers who can lead the Malaysian students to the real 1Malaysia.

11. In National schools there are moral education teachers who do not have knowledge of the cultures of Indians and Chinese, but yet they teach the students. How can they lead these children from the unknown to the known?

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