

PR Against The Teaching Of English By Way Of Being An Incidental Tool Under The Pretext Of Teaching Maths And Science

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By William Leong

Many engaged in the renewed debate on PPSMI and the petition for the continued teaching of mathematics and science in English may have lost sight of the ultimate objective for our education system. Our education system must produce Malaysians who are capable of critical and analytical thinking and proficient not only in the National Language but also the English language to be globally competitive.

Pakatan Rakyat is against PPSMI not because it is against the teaching of the English language. It is against the teaching of English by way of being an incidental tool under the pretext of teaching mathematics and science. In order to learn the English language it must be taught properly and intensively.

This is why Pakatan Rakyat is clear in its objectives and approach to the importance of the National language, English and mother tongue languages as part of its Education policy.

The third of Pakatan Rakyat's three objectives as encapsulated in the Common Policy Platform is to uphold the use of Bahasa Malaysia in accordance with Article 152 of the Federal Constitution and promote Bahasa Malaysia as the regional lingua franca, while protecting and strengthening the use of mother tongue languages for all races and improving the command of the English language in order to enhance Malaysia's global competitiveness. This is at page 2 of the Buku Jingga ("the Orange Book").

This is also set out in Pakatan Rakyat's policy on Education. In the document entitled "Policies of Pakatan Rakyat" it is clearly set out that Education should be aimed at creating a person who is balanced spiritually, physically and intellectually. Through the national education system, Pakatan Rakyat resolves to provide a system of education that is competent, high quality and guarantees equal opportunity to the people.

Pakatan Rakyat will among others:

- Make the national school system as the foundation of the nation's education system. Ensure equitable support and funding to religious schools, Chinese and Tamil national schools, mission schools and vocational schools in a concerted effort to increase the standard of national education;
- Emphasize the importance of students mastering various languages such as English, Arabic, Tamil, Mandarin and also other mother tongues.

Anwar Ibrahim at a press conference held in the Parliament lobby on 30 June 2009 explained Pakatan Rakyat's position on PPSMI. He said that learning Bahasa Malaysia or English is not a zero sum game. It is not correct, as some have tried to argue, that learning Bahasa Malaysia will be at the expense of English, Mandarin, Tamil or other mother tongue or vice-versa. Bahasa Malaysia can be taught with equal emphasis with English, Mandarin, Tamil and other mother tongues. Pakatan Rakyat is committed to Article 152 of the Federal Constitution while at the same time will

ensure that English will be taught properly and not have to be done surreptitiously under the guise of other subjects.

We have been deprived and oppressed for so long that we are grasping at the half measures for our children to be taught English by the inadequate substitute of going through mathematics and science. Language is not learnt through mathematical and scientific formulas. We must not shortchange our children. We must ensure that the Education policy and system must enable our children to be proficient not only in just one but should at the minimum be in two languages; Bahasa Malaysia and English or Bahasa Malaysia and mother tongue. Let's not act in haste by clutching at half-baked policies and short-changed our children in the process. There should be an option for students to study in English by having English medium schools just as there is Mandarin and Tamil schools.

WILLIAM LEONG JEE KEEN is Member of Parliament for Selayang

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