

Muhyiddin Is “Flip Flop Minister Who Denies That He Flip-Flops” On PPSMI

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By Lim Kit Siang

Deputy Prime Minister and Education Minister Muhyiddin Yassin’s denial that he had been inconsistent on the government policy on the teaching and learning of science and mathematics in English (PPSMI) has only made him a “flip-flop Minister who denies that he flip-flops” on PPSMI.

That Muhyiddin had “flip-flopped”, there is no need to go further than to quote the chairman of Parent Action Group for Education (PAGE) Noor Azimah Abdul Rahim who told the Malaysian Insider that she was “pleasantly surprised” by Muhyiddin’s announcement on PPSMI last Friday, “pointing out that until Thursday, Muhyiddin had appeared bent on pressing on with the government’s original decision to scrap PPSMI completely next year”. (The Malaysian Insider).

Controversial constitutional law academician, Aziz Bari has offered the view that PPSMI is unconstitutional in violating Article 152. He disagreed with the Kuala Lumpur High Court judgment by Justice Mohd Zawawi Salleh in May 2010 that it is constitutional for mathematics and science to be taught in English.

This is the second case where I do not agree with Aziz Bari , the other being his contention that hudud laws could be implemented without amendment of the Federal Constitution.

DAP had all along been consistent and principled in our stand on PPSMI.

DAP welcomes Muhyiddin’s announcement on PPSMI last Friday although it is not a satisfactory long-term solution to address the problems of raising the standards of English, mathematics and science among our students so that Malaysia can enhance our international competitiveness with the rest of the world.

When Muhyiddin announced the BN government decision to abolish the PPSMI in July 2009, I had described it as a Cabinet decision which was “as disastrous as the Cabinet decision in 2002 to rush headlong into implementing PPSMI for Std. One for all national, Chinese and Tamil primary schools without any preparation or research whatsoever”.

In my statement dated 13th July 2009, I had made four proposals for the Cabinet to “undo the various disasters of its decision on PPSMI”, viz:

- Endorsing the call of Parents Action Group for Education (Page) that schools should be given the option to teach science and mathematics in Bahasa Malaysia or English or in one’s mother tongue;
- Revert to the use of English as medium of instruction for mathematics and science in secondary schools;
- A flexible education approach that takes into account the urban-rural gap as well as the weaknesses of students, particularly in rural areas in proficiency in English, mathematics and science; and

- The important principle that advanced students should not be held back because of students who lagged behind academically.

Why did I say that the Cabinet decision in July 2009 to abolish the PPSMI was as disastrous as the 2002 Cabinet decision to implement the PPSMI?

This was what I said in my statement of 13th July 2009:

“The Cabinet decision on PPSMI (Pengajaran dan Pembelajaran Sains dan Matematik – teaching and learning of Science and Mathematics in English) is as disastrous as the Cabinet decision in 2002 to rush headlong into implementing PPSMI from Std. One for all national, Chinese and Tamil primary schools without any preparation or research whatsoever.

“Now, Deputy Prime Minister and Education Minister, Muhyiddin Yassin, in justifying the Cabinet’s latest decision on PPSMI has made the shocking revelation that before the PPSMI was launched six years ago, there had been neither discussion or approval by the Cabinet nor discussion with the parents.

“Several current Ministers were in the 2002 Mahathir Cabinet, including the present Prime Minister, Najib Razak, DPM Muhyiddin himself, Home Minister Hishammuddin Hussein and Information, Communication and Culture Minister Rais Yatim, and they as well as the leaderships of Umno, MCA, Gerakan, MIC, SUPP and other Barisan Nasional component parties should all explain how they could permit such a far-reaching decision affecting the future generation of Malaysians to be taken in so haphazard and irresponsible a manner!

“I agree that the Cabinet decision on PPSMI last Wednesday came as ‘a bombshell to many, especially those in the urban areas’.

“Just before Najib’s Cabinet reshuffle on April 10, the then Education Minister Hishammuddin was expected to have proposed the reversion to mother tongue for mathematics and science only at primary level, while retaining PPSMI at the secondary level.

“As many had said, the complete reversal of PPSMI at both primary and secondary levels ‘has come as a real surprise’, as it is sheer political expediency which makes no educational sense whatsoever.

“For instance, last Wednesday’s Cabinet decision means that Malaysia will have the most crazy educational system, where students in Form 4 in 2012 will have to switch to Bahasa Malaysia for mathematics and science in the last two years of secondary education, after nine years of learning these two subjects in English – again to switch back to English for pre-university and tertiary education!

“Ministers who want millions of Malaysian students to go through the crazy system of nine years of mathematics and science in English from Std. 1 to Form 3, followed by two years in Bahasa Malaysia in Forms 4 and 5, and switch back again to English for pre-university and tertiary education must have their heads examined as to whether they are fit to be in Cabinet in the first place!”

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