

Muhyiddin - The Most Blinkered Education Minister Ever
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By Tony Pua

After being ridiculed two weeks ago for laiming that Malaysia has a better education system than Britain, the United States and Germany, Muhyiddin Yassin has continued to give lavish praise on the Malaysian education system.

The Education Minister cited a recent survey by Introspek Asia, which revealed yesterday that 55 per cent of Malaysian adults believe that our education system is comparable to other countries, while 35 per cent said it is "better than that of developed countries".

"This finding is interesting as it reflects a positive attitude among a majority of Malaysians toward our education system," he said today in his keynote address at the Asian Strategy and Learning Institute's (ASLI) 16th Malaysian Education Summit here.

This is despite the fact that PEMANDU has accepted the fact that our education system clearly lags behind most other countries. Tengku Nurul Azian, the Education National Key Result Area (NKRA) Director has highlighted that based on the Programme for International Students Assessment (PISA) 2009+ study, Malaysian students were ranked in the bottom 30% when tested against students of 74 countries around the world on BFM89.9 yesterday evening.

In terms of reading literacy, we were ranked a poor 55th. In Mathematics literacy, it was 57th and faring only marginally better in Science at 52nd.

The Deputy Prime Minister has intentionally chosen to ignore the above study, but also another more comprehensive study which proved that the standard of education outcome has continuously declined over the past decade.

In probably the world's most comprehensive study on student performance (13-14 years old) and related factors for Mathematics and Science – Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMMS), the results in 1999, 2003 and 2007 showed a drastic decline in scores and rankings.

Between 2003 and 2007, Malaysia's score for Mathematics declined from 508 to 474 points. The 34 point drop was the highest suffered by the 60 countries studied. By comparing 2007 with 1999, our drop in score of 45 points was also the 2nd highest in the study.

Similarly for Science, Malaysia's score dropped the highest by 40 points from 510 to 471 from 2003 to 2007. From 1999 to 2007, we suffered a drop of 22 points, which was the second highest of all countries studied.

While the latest PISA study conducted in 2010 showed that we are ranked lowly in the world, the TIMMS data over 1999, 2003 and 2007 proved that the standards in education has been declining consistently and drastically over the past decade. The next TIMSS report for 2011 is expected to be published later this year and we can only hope against hope that there will no longer be any bad news.

Instead of sounding the alarm bells and take urgent actions to arrest the decline in our education standards, Muhyiddin has chosen to lavish praise on our outstanding education system as an example of the Barisan Nasional government's impeccable leadership. This clearly demonstrate that our Education Minister is completely blinkered and chooses only to believe and rely on highly questionable survey reports. If he continues to remain blinkered as he has over the past two weeks, then perhaps it is better that the Prime Minister Najib Razak will find a better replacement Minister.

We call upon Muhyiddin to provide his views on the above internationally accredited studies on our quality of education and to publish all recommendations by PEMANDU to his Ministry to ensure all recommended measures have been or are being implemented.

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