

## **Education Policy Flip-Flop: Mahathir Takes The Cake**

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**By Teo Nie Ching**

The Najib administration must establish a specific time frame and provide a deadline for the revival of a Chinese Independent School in Kuantan in order to prove that he is the Prime Minister and truly in charge of running this country.

I call on Prime Minister Najib Razak, Deputy Prime Minister Muhyiddin and the Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA) to state their positions with regard to Mahathir's statement which not only publicly opposed the proposal of reviving the Chinese Independent School, but claimed that vernacular schools will keep the nation apart.

Even though the former Premier has retired for 9 years now, his shadow and influence is still widely felt in the Barisan Nasional.

It is obvious that Mahathir is getting more and more vocal and provocative as we near the 13th general election. A few days prior, DAP Parliamentary Leader Lim Kit Siang had highlighted the possibility of the former PM's intention and desire to restore Mahathirism as a "hidden agenda" of the next general election. Mahathir's latest tirade seems to be exactly that.

I wish to remind Mahathir that the level of excellence and standard of education in Chinese Independent Schools has attracted many non-Chinese students, and that international schools here do not use Bahasa Malaysia as the medium of education. If Mahathir claims that the difference in the medium of education will be an obstacle towards national unity, why did he not use the same standards in the case of international schools?

Recently, the Ministry of Education announced that it had decided to remove the 40% quota regulation for local students in international schools, saying that it would not affect enrolment in national schools. Mahathir did not object to the relaxation of this regulation for international schools where the medium of instruction is English. However, by saying that vernacular schools will divide the people of this nation, this clearly shows that Mahathir is against Chinese education in general.

Perhaps Mahathir is getting absent-minded due to his age but I would like to remind him that in the year 1999, he permitted Foon Yew High School to establish a campus in Kulai, Johor. As such, why is his stand different now, to the point that he opposes Najib's proposal to revive a Chinese Independent School in Kuantan?

Unless Mahathir is getting confused due to his advanced years, then he is coming across as someone without a principled stand!

I would also like to remind PM Najib and DPM Muhyiddin that apart from the independent school in Kuantan, the application to revive Segamat Independent School is pending approval. There is an urgent need for the school in Segamat as students currently have to travel to Batu Pahat, Kluang and Yong Peng to attend the independent schools there.

The BN government must come out with a set of guidelines to institutionalise applications to establish Chinese independent schools, instead of kneejerk reactions to placate the Chinese community only when a general election is around the corner.

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