

Hishammuddin now mum on kris issue

NST-28/11/2006

EDUCATION Minister Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein refused to take the bait dangled by the Opposition yesterday on the issue of him holding the kris at the Umno Youth assembly.

Even as opposition leader Lim Kit Siang (DAP- Ipoh Timur) tried his best to goad him into retorting, the Umno youth leader kept his cool.

Instead, he said it was clear that issue raised by DAP representatives were shallow and did not hold water.

To Lim's claim that the ministry preferred national schools over vernacular schools, Hishammuddin said this was not the case.

He said the DAP should not be harping on the shortcomings at 1,200 vernacular schools when about 9,000 rural schools were facing numerous problems in terms of facilities and infrastructure.

"(From Lim's statements) it's as if vernacular schools have reached full capacity and are overflowing," he said, adding that the ministry took many things into account when planning vernacular schools, including the

availability of facilities and manpower.

"Before we announce the setting up of new schools, we have to discuss it with the school board, look into the land needs and the funds required. We do not make a promise and not deliver."

Earlier, Lim failed in his bid to deduct RM10 from the salaries of the education minister, his two deputies and the parliamentary secretary after an emotionally-charged debate.

He said Hishammuddin, Datuk Hon Choon Kim and Datuk Noh Omar and P. Komala Devi had allegedly failed in their duties.

He said they had failed to facilitate the building of new Chinese and Tamil primary schools under the 2007 Budget and Ninth Malaysia Plan.

Lim also said it was the unstated policy of the Education Ministry not to build new Chinese and Tamil primary schools to meet increased demand for such schools.

"It was never publicly stated until last Sept 20, when Noh Omar stated that no new vernacular schools would be built in the next five years."