

# Opposition brings up keris issue again

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THE Opposition once again took issue with the *keris*, a symbol of Malay culture, during the winding-up of the debate on the Education Ministry's Supply Bill for 2007.

Deputy Education Minister Datuk Noh Omar traded barbs with Chong Eng (DAP-Bukit Mertajam) after the Opposition member poked fun at the *keris*, an Umno party symbol, when asking about unoccupied teachers' quarters.

Noh, who was winding up the debate at the committee stage, became angry when Chong continued to raise the *keris* issue that arose after Umno Youth head Datuk Seri-Hishammuddin Hussein kissed the weapon at the recent Umno general assembly.

He described the Opposition party as ignorant about cul-

ture and said they had no understanding of history.

"The Opposition must know that the *keris* is a heritage of the Malays. Please do not politicise the *keris* again. Close the book," he said.

Noh said that it was because of the Opposition's ignorance of history that it continued to question the position of Chinese schools although the government policy had not changed, that is, to provide education to all races.

"The Opposition must understand the history behind the establishment of Chinese schools. So please do not politicise as it can destroy racial unity," he added.

The *keris* issue was hotly debated by the Opposition yesterday when a DAP motion to cut Hishammuddin's salary by

RM10 was rejected.

Noh said a study on 1,500 respondents from primary school pupils nationwide showed that their command of English in Science and Mathematics had improved.

"The pupils were given tests annually and we found that they are improving every year."

He added that their command of English could only be gauged when they sat for the Ujian Pencapaian Sekolah Rendah (UPSR) in 2008.

Noh also told the House that the number of dropouts in primary schools had fallen from 20,560 (1997-2002) to 9,713 (2000-2005), while secondary school dropouts decreased from 60,413 (1998-2002) to 43,586 (2001-2005). — Bernama