

Perkasa claims Malays will shun MIC in polls over Interlok axing

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By G Manimaran

KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 17 — Perkasa predicted today that Malay voters will reject any MIC candidates in the coming polls, saying the Barisan Nasional (BN) party was responsible for scrapping the controversial Interlok novel from the school syllabus.

The government has decided to withdraw Interlok from the Form Five syllabus when the new school year starts, with MIC president Datuk G. Palanivel saying yesterday that the Cabinet had reached the decision last week.

The novel by national laureate Datuk Abdullah Hussain is part of the literature requirement in the Bahasa Malaysia syllabus for Form Five students. It was published in 1971 and is set in Penang at the turn of the 20th century during the colonisation of Malaya by the British.

Recent controversy over the novel's use of words deemed racially sensitive and derogatory had led to the Education Ministry sanctioning amendments to its content for the current school year while it awaited a formal decision by the Cabinet.

Perkasa charged that Malay voters will not support MIC, and that independent candidates will end up contesting in areas which MIC will be placing its candidates.

Syed Hassan Syed Ali, the Malay group's secretary-general said that MIC had insulted Abdullah with the scrapping of the novel from the education syllabus.

"Perkasa is confident that Malay voters will not support MIC candidates or anti-Malay Indian candidates and there is a possibility that independent candidates will contest in MIC areas where Malay voters account for more than 50 per cent of the area's population," he said in a statement.

Syed Hassan said Perkasa was disappointed with the government's decision regarding the novel, and added that this showed Putrajaya's "weakness and failure to not succumb to pressure by minorities."

He claimed that this was a part of MIC's elaborate plan to woo Indian voters.

"It is wrong. Because of Indian votes, the dignity of Malay writers are insulted."

Syed Hassan stressed that the contents of the novel was based on facts.

"It is not insulting. What's insulting is that those in the upper caste call those in lower castes parias. Not the author," he added.

Human Resource Minister Datuk Seri Dr. S. Subramaniam, meanwhile, told Bernama Online that Deputy Prime Minister, Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin, who is also education minister, is expected to make a formal announcement in the next few days.

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