

Parents' group wants Najib to intervene in BM-English dispute
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By Lisa J. Ariffin

KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 21 — The Parent Action Group for Education (Page) wants Datuk Seri Najib Razak to intervene directly to resolve the issue of the teaching of Science and Mathematics in English (PPSMI), which the government is rolling back next year.

Page deputy chairman Sulaiman Mahran said today the prime minister must cut through the political shadow play and make a decision for the good of Malaysia's future generation.

"Give us the opportunity for pro-PPSMI and anti-PPSMI to present to the cabinet views from both sides and let the cabinet decide on this issue based on facts and without bias," he said in a press statement.

"We do not mind if the (Education) Ministry consider the parents stupid and easily deceived, but on this good day and good month of Ramadan, do not gamble the future of our nation's children with the rhetoric of the language struggle," he added.

Sulaiman said the statement by Education deputy minister Dr Puad Zarkashi on the ministry's intention to end PPSMI three days after Deputy Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin said the ministry was still studying the possibility of allowing the PPSMI option, has confirmed the latter's statement as a political shadow play to buy time until the implementation of using Bahasa Malaysia as the medium of instruction in 2012.

Sulaiman said although the people clearly want what is best for their children, Dr Puad still insists of upholding "the Government knows better" but given reasons for the failure of command of English was most shallow and baseless.

"Though we realise that our prime minister is dedicated to listening to the voices of honest citizens and have said 'The days of the government knows best are over', but "Little Napoleans" under his leadership have different visions and mentality," Sulaiman said.

Sulaiman stressed that English is the lingua franca of science and mathematics.

"There is no chance we can be scholars in this field if it's in the Malay language. Maybe as far as a village champion," he said.

In December 2009, the Ministry had announced the PPSMI will be replaced by a new, two-pronged policy known as 'Upholding the Malay Language and Strengthening the Command of English' or MBMMBI (Memartabatkan Bahasa Malaysia dan Memperkukuhkan Penguasaan Bahasa Inggeris) which will not be disadvantageous to either PPSMI defenders or opponents, but rather strike a balance between them.

Prior to the Sarawak polls on April 16, Najib had also announced he would consider using dual languages as the medium of instruction for Mathematics and Science in schools.

PPSMI was first introduced in 2003 but the Education Ministry decided last year to stop it by 2012 after consulting with teachers and parents around the country.

In the uproar that followed after PPSMI was abolished, Putrajaya introduced MBMMBI, which will see the teaching of Mathematics and Science revert to Bahasa Malaysia from 2012 while

more contact hours for English would be offered in order to improve students' skills in the language.

In May The Malaysian Insider reported that the Najib administration had not decided on switching back to English for Science and Mathematics (PPSMI) because several Cabinet ministers felt any change would be another embarrassing flip-flop.

The Education Ministry has also announced it would hire 10,000 teachers to teach English in local schools.

Najib has also got a promise from the United States to send Peace Corps volunteers to teach the language in the country.

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