

PKR MP moots English-medium schools
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KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 5 – The education system should make room for English-medium schools just as it has for Mandarin and Tamil schools, Selayang MP William Leong said today.

The PKR lawmaker said it was not enough to “grasp at half measures” by insisting that Science and Maths be taught in English (PPSMI) as this would not ensure mastery of the global lingua franca by students.

“We have been deprived and oppressed for so long that we are grasping at the half measures for our children to be taught English by the inadequate substitute of going through mathematics and science.

“Language is not learnt through mathematical and scientific formulas. We must not shortchange our children,” Leong (picture) said in a statement today.

He explained that Pakatan Rakyat (PR) objected to PPSMI not because of the medium of instruction but because English should be taught properly and intensively, not “surreptitiously under the guise of other subjects”.

He stressed that while the opposition would uphold the use of Bahasa Malaysia as set out in Article 152 of the Constitution, learning other languages was not a zero-sum game and could only enhance Malaysia’s competitiveness.

“It is not correct, as some have tried to argue, that learning Bahasa Malaysia will be at the expense of English, Mandarin, Tamil or other mother tongue or vice-versa.

“Bahasa Malaysia can be taught with equal emphasis with English, Mandarin, Tamil and other mother tongues,” he said.

To create competent Malaysians, the national education policy must ensure students are proficient in Bahasa Malaysia and either English or a vernacular tongue, Leong added.

Education Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin announced yesterday that students who have already been using PPSMI may continue with it until they complete their secondary education.

But Muhyiddin, also deputy prime minister, stressed that this did not mean the government was making a U-turn on its controversial decision to scrap the policy.

He explained that students between Year Three and Form Five next year would be given the option to learn science and maths in Bahasa Malaysia, English or both until they complete their primary and secondary education.

But this year’s Year One students, the first batch to undergo MBMMBI (Upholding the Malay Language and Strengthening Command of English), would have to continue learning the two subjects in Bahasa Malaysia when they enter Year Two.

MBMMBI was mooted in July 2009 to replace PPSMI and came into effect in January this year for Year One students. PPSMI was introduced in 2003 by former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

MCA has backed Putrajaya's move to scrap PPSMI but urged the government to make English a compulsory pass subject like Bahasa Malaysia in the SPM exam.

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