

Muhyiddin: Decision on PPSMI final
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KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 3 — The government's decision to scrap the use of English for science and mathematics (PPSMI) in schools is final, Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin said today.

In a response directed towards the Parent Action Group for Education (PAGE), the deputy prime minister said there would be no more negotiations on the matter as the government had already decided to do away with the policy in 2009.

"It was already decided by the Cabinet back in 2009, after many levels of discussion, was passed in Parliament and even the opposition supported it. There was no negative reaction back then, I don't know why it's being brought up.

"Maybe they (PAGE) ketinggalan zaman (behind the times.) The government will not bow down to the demands of small groups like this," Muhyiddin (picture) said today, in reference to demands made by the pro-English lobby group earlier this week.

PAGE chairman Datin Noor Azimah Abdul Rahim had bluntly said Barisan National (BN) risks losing votes in the upcoming general election if it continues to bar students from learning science and maths in English in schools.

"The matter is closed. Full stop. Some people can push and demand all they want, we are a democracy, but the government's decision is final," Muhyiddin said.

The education minister said he will make a detailed announcement tomorrow regarding the government's plans to smoothen the transition process from PPSMI to the MBMMBI (Upholding the Malay Language and Strengthening Command of English) policy.

Muhyiddin argued that teaching science and mathematics in English was not the best approach to improve students' command of the language, and that the government has introduced other methods, including hiring foreign trainers to conduct English training courses for teachers as well as having language labs in schools.

"The question is whether the best way to learn English is to learn English in maths and science or to bring in master teachers to help our teachers improve their proficiency? I believe this (the latter) is a better approach," he said in his speech at an English-language training project ceremony organised by SMR HR Group here.

The DPM met some 200 teachers who have undergone English-language training by foreign trainers under the project.

Opposition parties like the DAP have thrown their weight behind PAGE's cause, demanding that the Education Ministry be more flexible and give students the option which will enable the country to retain its best talents.

The growing row over the education policy has split the country along racial, political lines ahead of national polls likely to be called early next year.

Vocal fundamental groups are using the issue to champion their version of nationalism.

Several non-partisan civil societies have recently banded together to counter this tide but the powerful Malay-dominant political parties appear to be reluctant to commit to this hot potato issue ahead of the 13th general election.

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