

Muhyiddin: Stop Politicising Chinese Education Issue
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KUALA LUMPUR, April 4 (Bernama) -- Deputy Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin said today all quarters should stop politicising Chinese education issues and instead concentrate on efforts to enhance the educational quality and development in all schools.

Muhyiddin, who is Education Minister, said this was crucial so as to strengthen the country's competitiveness in facing the challenges ahead.

On the shortage of teachers in National-type Chinese Primary Schools (SJKC), he said, the government was truly committed and serious in tackling this issue in a prompt and effective manner, and that among the measures taken was the setting up of a special committee headed by Deputy Education Minister Datuk Dr Wee Ka Siong to address the shortage of SJKC teachers, last month.

"The move was taken not because of pressure from any quarters," he said in a statement Wednesday.

He added that as a government that cares, it has implemented systematic measures as well as streamlined and continuous policies to address the shortage of SJKC teachers.

"I hope, therefore, that the Chinese community would welcome the short-term and long-term measures announced by the committee on March 20 because the national-type primary schools are never separated from the country's education system," he said.

Muhyiddin said it was important to explain this issue so that the true pictures can be given to counter baseless claim and accusation against the government and the ministry.

"To ensure the smooth running of learning and teaching in SJKC nationwide, the Education Ministry has been striving each year to fill up the vacancies for SJKC teachers," he said.

He pointed out that in 2009 there was a shortage of 4,991 SJKC teachers. The figure dropped to 3,043 in 2010, and to 2,720 in 2011 while for this year, the number was 1,874, he said.

"Of the 1,874, the Education Ministry has appointed 1,482 interim teachers to fill up the vacancies. The shortage of SJKC teachers now stands at 392, and headmasters are allowed to propose the appointment of interim teachers to the state Education Departments to fill up these posts," he said.

Muhyiddin said the ministry allocated 38,047 posts for SJKCs and that until end of January this year, 36,173 trained teachers have been posted in all SJKCs.

"A total of RM1.8 billion is spent annually to pay the salary of teachers and manage the operations of SJKC schools nationwide," he added.

He said the special committee met with Chinese educationist associations and other trust holders on five occasions -- on March 5, 8, 16 and 23 and on April 2 -- to overcome the problems faced by Chinese schools.

He pointed out that during the meeting on March 5, the committee met the Planning and Policy Research Division (BPPDP), Teacher's Education Division (BPG), Education Services Commission (SPP), Malaysian Institute of Teachers' Education (IPGM), School Daily Management Division (BPSH) and SJKC Headmasters Association.

The committee also held a joint meeting with Dong Zhong, Jiao Zhong, HuaZhong and the National Union of the Teaching Profession (NUTP) on March 8, 16 and 23 as well as last Monday, he said, adding that Dong Zhong only attended two of the meetings.

"To ensure all decisions of the committee are implemented as agreed, a follow up coordination meeting was held by the committee on March 27 together with the BPPDP, BPG, IPGM and the NUTP, with the BPSH acting as the secretariat," he said.

Muhyiddin said to overcome the shortage of teachers in SJKCs, a total of 1,482 interim teachers have been deployed to all states, while headmasters have been given the greenlight to propose the appointment of the remaining 392, on April 1.

"These interim teachers will serve until the deployment of trained teachers can be carried out, depending on the actual vacancies based on the approved Personnel Management Expenditure Estimate."

He said on March 27, the Education Ministry issued an extension of service for the SJKC's interim teachers, and that to implement this agenda, SJKC headmasters were allowed to nominate those with qualifications to become teachers, with the appointment to be made by the respective state education directors.

On the issue of remedial teachers who have no bilingual capability, and the move by SJKC board of governors to transfer 100 such teachers because of their inability to communicate in Chinese, Muhyiddin said, the ministry's study showed that there were among these teachers who obtained a credit in Chinese language.

"Seven of them are found to have Chinese language qualification, namely two in Melaka (SJKC Chabau and SJKC Pay Hsien), two in Sarawak (SJKC Chung Hua, Sibuti and SJKC Chun Hua, Serian), one in SJKC Hin Hua, Selangor and two in Johor (SJKC Sengkang, Kulai Jaya and SJKC Ban Foo)," he said.

Muhyiddin said that the ministry decided that these teachers who have Chinese language qualification, would remain in these schools while other teachers would be redeployed to national schools starting April 16 as decided by the special committee at its meeting on Monday.

To overcome the shortage of teachers with social studies option, who have no Chinese language qualification, he said, 17 of them with Malay language minor have been posted in Kelang, Selangor, and one of them, who has Chinese language qualification, will remain in existing school, SJKC Chung Hua, while the rest would be move to national schools.

A teacher at SJKC Chabau Melaka has been replaced with a Chinese studies teacher.

On the teaching of Malay and English languages at Level 1 of SJKC Grade A and B, he said,

these would be taught by teachers who have Chinese language qualification at least at the Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia level.

Muhyiddin said in terms of long-term initiatives, the BPG and IPGM were currently drawing up an option intervention programme for teachers who have not opted for the Malay and English languages, and taught subjects other than Chinese language for more than five years.

These courses are expected to start at the latest by end of this year so as not to affect the teaching and learning process in classes, he said, adding that the government has come up with plans based on the needs of SJKCs, and the mechanism to train not only teachers for the Chinese language but also to deploy more Chinese studies lecturers.

Muhyiddin said at the moment, there are 72 Chinese studies lecturers at IPGMs nationwide, and that the ministry has agreed to take in 30 more to enhance the teacher training capacity.

"The application to become lecturers at IPGMs, including for Chinese studies lecturers, was opened between March 13 and 30. At the moment, the secretariat at the ministry is processing these applications and intake will be made on June 1 this year.

"Intake of lecturers will be made continuously," he said.

To increase the number of trained SJKC teachers, the ministry has also consulted the Education Services Commission and found that among the bachelor degree holders who were interviewed from public institutions of higher learning, 105 of them had Chinese language qualification at the SPM level.

"The ministry, therefore, agreed to appoint them to serve in SJKCs in the near future," he said, adding that the move taken by the government showed that it is sincere in resolving the issue.

"Nevertheless, I've instructed the committee to continue holding discussions and to obtain inputs from all stakeholders, to look into all views and take into consideration all aspects, and find a solution if there are other issues being raised," he said.

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