

**Education Ministry Does Not Neglect Chinese And Tamil SRJKs - Muhyiddin  
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SHAH ALAM, April 12 (Bernama) -- Deputy Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin says the Education Ministry does not sideline or give differential treatment to national-type Chinese and Tamil schools (SRJKs) as both are an important part of the country's education system.

"As such, the ministry wants the SRJKs to show good performance and many of these schools are comparable with the national schools in terms of achievements.

"Why? Because our system does not treat these SRJKs differently, but some quarters including the opposition think otherwise; that we give priority to only the national schools."

Muhyiddin, who is also education minister, said this when meeting teachers from Chinese and Tamil SRJKs in conjunction with his visit to Selangor under the state Barisan Nasional's Nurani Rakyat Programme, here.

"There are quarters out there trying to confuse the public, especially now that the general election is near. But under the BN government, the national education system that includes Chinese and Tamil national-type schools cannot be changed. And we have accepted this as part of our legacy," he said.

On the shortage of teachers at the SRJKs, Muhyiddin said the problem was also faced by national schools, especially the shortage of English language teachers.

"We are carrying out measures to solve the problem, but hiring retired teachers, for instance, to fill the vacancies will take a bit of time.

"Besides, as many school teachers are women with about 20,000 of them giving birth each year, their places will have to be filled when they go on maternity leave."

Muhyiddin said in terms of infrastructure, the situation faced by the SRJKs was not as bad as at schools in Sabah and Sarawak's interior where he had to use helicopters to visit these schools which would otherwise take four days to reach them by land.

He said some of these remote schools were 50 years old and in worsening condition, and according to the ministry's audit on school buildings, there were 600 schools in dilapidated condition and needing attention.

Building schools in Sabah and Sarawak was also costly, at RM60 million each due to the higher cost of transporting building materials to the remote school locations compared to RM20 million to build a new school in the peninsula, he added.

Muhyiddin said the government's annual allocation for managing Chinese SRJKs was RM2.89 billion and RM1.04 billion for Tamil SRJKs, with a major portion going to paying salaries.

Currently, there are 1,294 SRJKs nationwide, with almost 700 of them facing a shortage of

students. Some of these schools have only 10 to 20 students each.

Muhyiddin said on average, the annual operational expenditure for one Chinese SRJK was RM2.23 million, Tamil SRJK at RM1.99 million and national school at RM2.26 million.

"Hence, there is not much difference in the allocations for these three school streams including for schools with a very small number of students," he said.

Muhyiddin urged Chinese and Tamil SRJKs to strive at improving their performance to achieve the high-performance school status.

He said if some people thought that infrastructure factor could affect academic performance, Sekolah Kebangsaan Ulu Lubai in Limbang, Sarawak proved otherwise as it had been categorised as a high-performance school and received an additional allocation from the government.

"Although the school is made of wood and has only 100 pupils, it is a high-achieving school. So, the SRJK teachers present here today should find the answers as to why such a remote school could achieve the status but they (SRJKs) could not," he said.

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