

Opposition lauds call to de-politicise education but doubts government's will
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KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 11 — Opposition MPs today lauded Datuk Seri Najib Razak's call to de-politicise education, but remained sceptical of the government's willpower to do so.

Lembah Pantai MP Nurul Izzah Anwar and Petaling Jaya Utara MP Tony Pua today praised Prime Minister Najib's statement this morning that education must be de-politicised, but said the implementation of the concept has yet to be seen.

"I applaud (Najib) when he said we should de-politicise education, and hope he stays true to his words," Nurul Izzah told the The Malaysian Insider today.

"But I will wait next week to see if I can enter any school in my constituency to see if they're serious about de-politicising education," she added, explaining there was a standing order forbidding opposition MPs from entering school grounds in their constituency.

Tony Pua appeared shocked when asked to respond to Najib's statement, saying: "Of course it must be de-politicised."

"We agree it must be de-politicised but at the same time we can see political elements in it," he said.

"The question now is why weren't we consulted in the entire exercise?" he asked.

"Are they going to involve us in the parliamentary committees set up to deal with education?"

"So de-politicisation is easy to say, but are they doing it? Are they involving us? Are they calling us for the meetings to give feedbacks? That process must be taken into consideration," he added.

Najib this morning called for the de-politicisation of education at the launch of the new education masterplan 2013-2025.

He also acknowledged Malaysia's bottom dwelling performance in international education benchmarks but said the government is taking bold moves to revamp the system to foster critical thinking skills and prepare the next generation for the jobs of the future.

When asked to comment on the blueprint, Nurul Izzah said: "The government is not doing this for us as favour, it is their responsibility."

"The programme is long overdue. We've been waiting for blueprint, it should have been done years ago to seriously look into the needs of education sectors," she said.

"We do not want this to be a mere election campaign."

Pua pointed out that many of targets in previous blueprints were never completed, citing then Education Minister Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein's blueprint, in which the latter proposed students were taught a "third language" in schools.

"It was never completed, so it was a failure in the earlier blueprint so they have to reinsert it in this blueprint," he said.

Pua added the current blueprint had potential, but it is up to Putrajaya to realise it.

"Its success depend on ability to implement it as well as political will to do so."

The current education masterplan comprises of 11 "shifts" to inculcate six attributes in children: knowledge, thinking skills, leadership, bilingual proficiency, ethics and national identity.

The shifts include empowering state and district education departments and schools to customise solutions based on need and recruiting only the top 30 per cent of graduates for teacher training.

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