

PKR wants Muhyiddin to personally see 'stinking situation' of rural schools in Sarawak

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By Desmond Davidson

The Sarawak state opposition has urged Education Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin to go on a tour of some of the state's rural primary schools to see for himself how the children are coping without water supply to the schools.

"It's a really stinking situation," state PKR chief Baru Bian (pic) said after returning from a weekend visit to his rural constituency of Ba Kelalan where he said some of the schools in the Lawas-Tinjar areas have had no piped water "for years".

He said what he knew could probably be only the "tip of the iceberg" with more schools experiencing the same fate.

"How can students excel in their studies if they have to study in such a school?" he asked.

One of the schools Baru is keen to show Muhyiddin, who is also deputy prime minister, is the "new" SK Long Luping where there was no piped water supply in the building plans.

"How could piped water supply not be included in the plan?" Baru asked of the school that is about 79km from Lawas town in the Baram hinterland and with a student population of fewer than 80.

To get to the school, students have to go on a three- to four-hour drive on treacherous logging roads.

He said the school's management tried to be resourceful and with the help of the parents, they tried to fashion out some kind of water system where they would draw water from the Trusan River that flowed nearby.

Baru said members of the school's Parents-Teachers Association (PTA) attempted to make a small reservoir by the river from where they could then pump the water to the school.

"Unfortunately, the RM70,000 they had been allocated for their project was exhausted midway through the project. So they are back to square one."

He said that while schools like SK Long Luping could harvest rain water during the rainy season, the dry season in the middle of the year could be an unbearable time for the pupils and teachers alike.

It is not only schools without water that Baru would like Muhyiddin to see firsthand.

He said there are schools that had been abandoned because the contractor allegedly "ran into financial difficulties" and schools that get flooded after rain.

"Muhyiddin must investigate all the problems in the schools in rural Sarawak."

Baru said the additional allocation of RM1 billion for repairs of dilapidated schools in Sarawak and Sabah, announced by Muhyiddin when he visited the state last month, was just not enough.

Muhyiddin said the allocation was for 600 dilapidated schools in the two states.

Baru pointed out there are 800 schools in Sarawak alone that needed repairs and urged the state government to also pitch in to solve this problem. – March 4, 2014.

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