

We acknowledge importance of English, says Muhyiddin

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PUTRAJAYA: Deputy Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin took 25 minutes off his schedule to interact with NST Online readers yesterday, fielding questions on the new Malaysian education system.

Although he managed to reply to only six questions on the teaching and learning of Science and Mathematics in English (PPSMI), Muhyiddin put across his message that the reversal of policy would actually put Malaysians in a better position.

"We acknowledge the importance of English. Although we have abolished PPSMI, we have not relegated English language to a secondary position.

"I understand that it is important for our children to be proficient in English to meet the needs of the job market, and I do believe that the new approach that we are taking in terms of teaching English would put us in a better position," he said in the 25-minute session from his office here.

He was asked if the decision to reverse the policy would impact the job market here, especially since the government was also urging foreigners to set up businesses here.

on the status of PPSMI. I sensed that he understood the situation. He did make some proposals that we allow PPSMI to continue at the secondary level but I explained to him that we have to be seen to be consistent in implementing this new policy at both the primary and secondary school levels. Tun's concern was also proficiency of English and I had taken time to explain to him what I intended to do for the English language in schools. My gut feeling at that time was that he was not totally against the plan and at the same time, he was not happy with the move.

Riley: I understand the need to "memantapkan Bahasa Inggeris" but I don't see how one can "memertabatkan Bahasa Malaysia" using the language to teach subjects in school. To "memertabatkan Bahasa Malaysia", one has to look at its utilisation of the language and not merely translating English books into Bahasa Malaysia.

Muhyiddin: When we say "memantapkan Bahasa Inggeris", it is to strengthen English as I have proposed yesterday. The content of the subject, aside from having qualified teachers, I also mentioned about the need to introduce grammar in schools, elements



Deputy Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin with NST chief news editor Fauziah Ismail at a live session with NST Online yesterday.

To a question on whether the move would be a stumbling block for students when they enter university, Muhyiddin reminded that the government was taking the pragmatic move by not changing the matriculation and Sijil Tinggi Persekolahan Malaysia courses which were mainly in English.

"I believe that with this new innovative approach that we

are taking in teaching and learning of English, they should not find it difficult to adapt to the needs of acquiring whatever courses they take in universities."

Excerpts of the session:

All For the Road: The current hot topic now is the scrapping of PPSMI from year 2012 onwards. There are a lot of responses from the public, both

positive and negative. Our former PM Tun Mahathir (Mohamad) was reported to be disappointed with the announcement. He said that he was only given a briefing and not being consulted about the matter. What have you got to say?

Muhyiddin: I cannot please everyone. I have high regard for Tun Mahathir. That is why we met with him to brief him