

The subject of the national education system always invites a variety of opinions from all quarters of Malaysian society. I was asked for comments on this subject last Saturday. Although I had given my answer, I feel it pertinent to articulate it once again, and perhaps invite more discussion on this in my blog.

However which way the debate goes, the fact is this: our education blueprint was drafted from the standpoint that all Malaysians have the right to their choice of education in this country. It was a wish of the people following our Independence, and the government acted in accordance with that wish.

Over the years and at almost in every instance, the issue of the ideal education system for Malaysia is politicised. As the Prime Minister for all Malaysians, I view that all of us must find equilibrium. Let us all be reminded that at the end of the day, the crux of the issue is ensuring that our future generations, our future leaders, are able to obtain the best education system. We must make that leap into a knowledge- and innovation-based economy. This is one reason why I announced during the recent budget for the National Scholarship to be awarded to 30 of the best performing SPM students based purely on merit.

I have heard many of you call for a switch to a single-stream system as a way to promote greater unity and integration among Malaysians. However, many do not constitute most. I have also heard many who feel strongly for the right to choose based on the existing education system. I have heard these two different opinions and acknowledge them.

Hence, we must collectively agree upon a system that benefits all Malaysians, that espouses the values we all uphold. Are we prepared to eschew the right to choose and seek a compromise? In voicing our viewpoint, have we given thought to the differing opinions of others? While the public is still ambivalent and disinclined to make that collective decision, I do not wish for discord to arise within our society on a subject of great sensitivity. Even the noblest of intentions can be rendered pointless if we are unprepared to accept and embrace it. We will move to a single stream school only when we are ready and only if this is the wish of the "rakyat".

"1Malaysia, People First, Performance Now"

