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National Unity Cannot be Achieved by Closing Down Vernacular Schools

Gabungan Bertindak Malaysia (GBM) refers to the statement made by the Youth Chief of Parti Bersatu Pribumi Malaysia (PPBM), Wan Ahmad Fayhsal who expressed that the vernacular schools should be closed in stages in order to forge unity.

He also claimed that there are many opinions that the existence of vernacular schools contradicts the Federal Constitution. Such views are unfortunately misleading.

While Article 152 of the Federal Constitution stipulates that the national language is the Malay language, many conveniently ignore the subsequent provisions that states clearly that (a) no person shall be prohibited or prevented from using (otherwise than for official purposes), or from teaching or learning, any other language and (b) nothing in this clause shall prejudice the right of the Federal Government or of any state government to preserve and sustain the use and study of the language of any other community in the Federation.

Article 152 provides total freedom to all Malaysians to learn any language that they wish. More importantly, it affirms positively the duty of the Federal Government or state government to preserve and sustain the use and study of mother tongue of any community.

ARMADA youth chief must also be aware that the right to mother tongue education is universally recognised and promoted by the United Nations. Such fundamental right cannot be negated on the justification of national unity.

It is also illogical to argue about achieving national unity by trying to eliminate the language and culture of other communities in the country. Such approach is not only unjust, it will fail as the injustice of such measure imposes on other communities will in turn become a new source of oppression and intensify disunity.

In order to address national disunity, one must also look at the real root causes that contribute to disunity in the country, which lies deep in the politics of divide and rule in the country and the politicisation of race and religion by politicians to gain support and maintain in power.

Blaming the vernacular schools for national disunity is simply ingenuous and a diversion of public attention away from the actual real root causes.

