NEW STRAITS TIMES

Expert: Abolishing UPSR, PT3 was a mistake [WATCH]

By Hazween Hassan - September 27, 2024 @ 10:30am

KUALA LUMPUR: A dual assessment system, combining classroom-based evaluations with national assessments, is essential to ensure a comprehensive measure of student performance.

Addressing the ongoing debate about reinstating UPSR and PT3 examinations, educationist Professor Dr Ramlee Mustapha said that there is a need to strike a balance between independent evaluations and centralised assessments like national school-leaving examinations.

This, he said, is to avoid potential biases inherent in teacher-made assessments.

"Without centralised assessments, our education system — already highly centralised — would lose coherence. A national assessment every few years can complement ongoing classroom assessments," he explained on the New Straits Times' Beyond the Headlines.

Ramlee then drew comparisons with Singapore's approach to primary school assessments.

"Singapore has moved to abolish the Primary School Leaving Examination (PSLE), akin to our UPSR, but their Ministry of Education rejected the move, citing that while the PSLE isn't perfect, it serves as a useful tool to evaluate classroom assessments."

When asked if the abolition of the UPSR and PT3 examinations was a mistake, Ramlee affirmed, "Yes, I believe we should have kept them."

He further criticised arguments dismissing the significance of international assessments like the Programme for International Student Assessment (Pisa) scores.

"Saying Pisa scores don't matter is akin to an athlete claiming the Olympics don't matter if they don't win a medal. These assessments are critical for comparing our education system with others globally.

"The Pisa results were rock bottom," he said, suggesting that this may be linked to the removal of national examinations and that the PT3 assessments were closely aligned with Pisa requirements.

"If you want to reform the assessment system on a national scale, these two national assessments are significant and have been part of our education system for decades.

"If you're going to decide on abolishing them altogether, you must get all the stakeholders to agree on that," he added.

On Sept 23, Education Minister Fadhlina Sidek said that her ministry will not rush to reintroduce the Ujian Pencapaian Sekolah Rendah (UPSR) and Pentaksiran Tingkatan 3 (PT3) examinations.

Instead, they will conduct a thorough study of the matter before presenting recommendations to the cabinet.

She said that any decision made will prioritise the well-being of students, particularly in alignment with the National Education Philosophy.

"We need to prepare our overall perspective (on reintroducing UPSR and PT3 before bringing it to the cabinet). We are in the process of finalising these views. However, it cannot be viewed from just one aspect, as it involves larger issues.

"Our children are not lab rats that we can just test repeatedly with exams or no exams. We need to have a solid plan and we have already undertaken various measures to strengthen the Pentaksiran Bilik Darjah and our teacher training," she said.



Professor Dr Ramlee Mustapha speaks during the Beyond The Headlines podcast recording at Balai Berita. - NSTP/AIMAN HARIZ AZHAR