NEW STRAITS TIMES

Former deputy education minister calls for concrete solution to high SPM absenteeism

By Adib Povera, Amalina Kamal - May 28, 2024 @ 6:42pm



New Straits Times, Beyond The Headlines guest, Special Interview with MIC (Central Working Committee member) Datuk P. Kamalanathan at Digital Studio NSTP, Balai Berita. NSTP/SHAHRUL M ZAIN

KUALA LUMPUR: Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs) need to work closely with the Education Ministry to develop a concrete solution to address the alarming trend of the high number of secondary school students who did not sit for their Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM) examinations.

Former deputy education minister Datuk P. Kamalanathan said that, apart from parents, teachers are the other individuals who have access to students who did not appear for their SPM examinations.

In an interview with the New Straits Times' Beyond the Headlines, Kamalanathan shared a programme undertaken by a school in Serendah when he was the Hulu Selangor member of Parliament.

"The programme involved a group of teachers going beyond their 'tugas hakiki' (core responsibilities), with each teacher visiting 10 parents of students after school hours.

"These visits not only allowed the teachers to understand the living conditions of their students but also to identify any assistance needed by the parents (to ensure their children continue attending school), as well as other issues. All this information was gathered during the visits.

"This approach enabled teachers of Form Five students to have direct access not only to the students but also to their parents. This will allow for any problems to be resolved before the examination period," he said.

He, however, said it is unfair for other teachers to emulate such a programme since they are already overwhelmed with workloads.

"But then we have the PTAs. This can be something undertaken by the PTAs." he said.



Datuk P. Kamalanathan.

Kamalanathan was asked to comment on the announcement by the Education director-general Azman Adnan yesterday that a total of 10,160 students did not sit for the 2023 SPM examinations.

Azman said they were among 383,685 students who registered for the 2023 SPM examinations.

The previous year, the Education Ministry confirmed that nearly 30,000 candidates who were registered did not sit for the 2022 SPM examinations.

It was previously reported that the Malaysian Examination Syndicate said some 9,000 students who registered for the 2021 SPM examinations did not sit for the exams

In the same interview, Kamalanathan did not believe that the cost of living has anything to do with the high number of absences in the SPM examinations, since the government has rolled out a slew of initiatives to ensure that education is accessible to all children irrespective of their families' household income.

"We really do not know what the problems are. However, there must be reasons or cases. And it is a very complicated situation because these children are accessible to education.

"That means we know they came to school but suddenly they did not sit for the examination," he said.

Kamalanathan also highlighted the need for a comprehensive study to identify the cause behind the high number of absences for the national examination.

"We really need to study very deeply the reasons why these children (students) did not sit for the examination.

"The data is available, and the students are accessible. I think anyone (organisation) can undertake the survey or research to determine why (these students failed to sit for the examination).

"There will surely be a solution (once the survey or research has been completed)"

Full interview out this Friday, May 31, in NST's Beyond the Headlines.