

Read the following editorial written by Wong Chun Wai in The Star

## Bring back English schools

BY WONG CHUN WAI

SERIOUSLY, the government should allow the use of English as a medium of instruction in schools again. If there are Chinese and Tamil primary schools alongside national schools, there is no reason for Malaysians not to have other options. At present, the other option for better English proficiency is in private schools, which allocate more time for the teaching of English despite following the national school syllabus. However, it is an expensive option that only a few can afford.

Why should the right of Malaysians to study in English-medium schools be enjoyed only by those who can afford to study at international schools? There are many good reasons for English-medium schools to be reintroduced, chief of which must surely be the language's neutral status whereby no one can claim ownership to it. Older Malaysians who went to English-medium schools can testify that it was in such an environment that they made many friends of all ethnic backgrounds. The English schools, as they were popularly referred to, were neutral grounds and were real cultural melting pots. Friendship cultivated at primary school level among Malaysians of different races and religions would always be strong and deep. Our current primary school system basically does not provide such opportunities for our young ones to mix.

We do get to mix with one another later on in life, but working relationships that are untested or superficial are not true friendships. Older Malaysians can narrate long stories of how they used to sleep over at their friends' homes, eating with their friends' families and parents of their friends treating them like their own children. These friendships continued even after they went to university, entered working life, and got married.

During my first year at Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, I also chose Malay Letters as one of my three majors. At UKM, it is also compulsory to pass the Islamic Civilisation course, which was a basic course on Islam. I have also amassed a huge collection of books on Islam in my private library, and the works of Malay artists like Yusuf Ghani and Ismail Latiff continue to inspire me. I dare say many of our politicians and leaders of so-called non-governmental organisations, who loudly make statements with racial overtones, do not even have such credentials. But the point I am making is that more and more Chinese parents are sending their children to Chinese primary schools because they believe the standard of teaching and discipline in these schools is better. For the same reason, the number of Malay students at such schools has also increased.

But most Malay parents send their children to national schools where they form the bulk of the student population. Over the years, the national schools have been seen by many Chinese as becoming more religious in nature. If the Chinese are shunning national schools, then the students in these schools would be predominantly Malay. The Federal Constitution guarantees the position of Chinese and Tamil schools. But the reality is that it is unhealthy when the student population in Chinese schools is 99.9% Chinese, Tamil schools is 100% Indian and national schools, dubbed Malay schools, is 80% to 90% Malay!

It is meaningless to talk about 1Malaysia when our children have no friends of other races in their formative years! Many Malaysians in their 30s and 40s now are already in this situation. Just ask Malaysians at random how many real friends of other races, not colleagues, customers or bosses, they have. Be honest. We have churned out bigots in our schools. It also doesn't help that the various races are only watching channels in their own languages on Astro. The only time they probably watch the same channel is when an English Premier League football match is on.

If we are serious about restoring the standard of English in schools and improving race relations in this country, bring back the English-medium schools. Let Malaysians choose.

After reading the “*Khaled: AUKU Amendment Will Make Students Involvement in Politics Common*” by Bernama, write a letter to the editor to give your views or opinions on the issue highlighted in the article.

<p><b>Provide a title</b></p>	<p>_____</p>
<p><b>Introduction</b>  <b>+ Reference</b>  <b>+ Issue</b>  <b>+ Your stance</b></p>	<p>_____          _____          _____          _____          _____</p>
<p><b>Your Points</b></p> <p><b>(Provide at least 2 points based on your opinion)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Back up your points with examples</i></li> <li>- <i>Use persuasive language techniques where possible.</i></li> </ul>	<p>_____          _____          _____          _____          _____          _____          _____          _____          _____          _____          _____          _____          _____          _____          _____          _____</p>
<p><b>Conclusion</b></p> <p><b>+ Restate stance</b>  <b>+ Suggestion</b>  <b>+ Punch line (Optional)</b></p>	<p>_____          _____          _____          _____          _____          _____</p>
<p><b>Sign Off</b>  <b>(write your name and place)</b></p>	<p>_____          _____</p>

