

KEMPEN SEJARAH MALAYSIA SEBENAR (KemSMS)

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KemSMS Press Statement on URGENT NEED FOR HISTORY EDUCATION REFORM **19th January 2012**

KemSMS is a civil society movement launched in May 2011. It comprises many respectable academicians, professionals and concerned parents as well as non- governmental organizations seeking reform towards a liberal and progressive school history syllabus and textbooks. The main objective of our movement is to contribute towards a well balanced, truthful and accurate depiction of Malaysian and world history.

KemSMS stresses that 'History' is important that it is used to validate our identities and origins; it influences the country's development and fosters a sense of belonging. Truth has to prevail at all times.

In line with its objective, KemSMS has undertaken various studies to analyse the weaknesses and shortcomings in the history syllabus and textbooks used in schools. Arising from these studies and consultation with other key stake holders, we have now prepared proposals and recommendations to achieve the goal of a balanced and progressive history education, and submitted them to the government appointed History Review Panel as well as to the Minister of Education.

On 27 December 2011, we met with the Special Committee to Study the History Curriculum and Textbooks in Secondary Schools, headed by Dato' Hj Omar bin Hj. Mohd Hashim. We were informed that our views as well as our proposals for reform would be taken into account by the Special Committee in its work. We were also informed that the final shape of the history syllabus would be decided by the Ministry of Education and that this process of introducing the new syllabus and textbooks would involve a lengthy period and take several years.

We are very worried that this process of revision is not sufficient to address the concerns of the many thousands of anxious parents who have signed the online and hard copy petition on the need for urgent reform in our history syllabus and textbooks.

We call upon the Government and relevant authorities to undertake quicker policy reform and urgent measures to ensure

- a broad and balanced perspective of the major civilizations and events in world history
- accurate historical facts on Malaysia's historical development from an unbiased viewpoint;
- due and fair recognition to the contribution of all communities towards the historical development of the nation;

It is imperative that in molding the learning and values of our younger generation that the history syllabus and textbooks do not give undue emphasis on any particular civilization or religion and does not contain any political or socio-religious agenda.

We also wish to emphasize that it is the textbooks and the teachers teaching history that will help to shape the knowledge and understanding of history for our students.

In view of the poor quality and biased nature of the current textbooks, we call on the authorities to undertake the following immediate actions:

- Review the system of text book selection to be reflective of our multi-racial and multi-cultural society
- Ensure the existing system of text book selection is transparent
- Invite feedback from the public and education experts on ways to reform the present textbook system which has not produced quality outcomes
- Require history books selected as text books to be written by historians or social scientists with a strong historical specialization and with expertise in the subject matter
- Require co-authored text books to include multi-racial teams rather than teams from one single ethnic or religious community to reduce racial and religious bias
- Require the history textbook selection committee to consult with an independent panel of experts before approval of the text
- Membership in the textbook selection committee should be made publicly known and should reflect our multi-racial and multi-religious society
- Selection of text book authors should be subject to an open tender process in the same way as other government procurement. This will ensure that the best people are chosen to write the books and reduce the possibility of abuse or corrupt practices
- The current system of use of compulsory history texts should be reviewed in favour of one which is more liberal and allows the use of diverse texts by teachers and schools

KemSMS as a group of caring citizens wants to cherish the “TRUE MALAYSIAN HISTORY”. We want to educate our young well in the areas of inter-personal skills, knowledge and skill training and in professionalism. For this, we should develop in them intellectual honesty and strength.

KemSMS stresses here that our young will not be able to survive the stiff competition from the rest of the world if we do not do our part to educate them well. Accurate and objective history is what our children should be taught.

As Malaysians who are Muslims, Hindus, Christians, Buddhists, Sikhs, (Malays, Indians, Chinese, Eurasians, Orang Asli, Ibans, Bidayuh, Orang Ulu, Kadazan-Dusun, Bajau, Murut and many other brothers and sisters in East Malaysia) it will be enlightening to know that all of us are part of Malaysian History. We want to be proud of that **TRUE HISTORY**.