‘Good idea but dialogue needed’

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PETALING JAYA: The suggestion to bring back English medium schools as an option to improve race relations in the country is a progressive and interesting idea, said Deputy Education Minister P. Kamalanathan.

“It’s an interesting idea that I think is progressive. However, owing to the history and complexity of the nation, it requires very detailed dialogue with all stakeholders before any concrete decision is made,” he said yesterday.

However, Youth and Sports Minister Khairy Jamaluddin tweeted that even if English medium schools were to be brought back, this “could not happen overnight” as the teachers must be trained to teach in English.

“One reason PPSMI (Teaching and Learning of Science and Mathematics in English) failed was because teachers were struggling to teach these subjects in English,” he wrote, adding that he was not against the suggestion per se. “Just a dose of reality from an implementation standpoint,” Khairy pointed out.

Universiti Tun Abdul Razak Deputy Dean Prof Dr Nik Rosnah Wan Abdullah said while Bahasa Malaysia should continue as the main medium of instruction, the importance of English and other vernacular languages must be acknowledged.

The present schooling system of allowing different vernacular schools to exist had led to the deterioration of race relations over the years, she said.

“What is needed is a single national type school where students from differing racial backgrounds learn not only Bahasa Malaysia but also English and each other’s mother tongues,” she said.