

MALAYSIA

Saifuddin Nasution insists BM test for citizenship as basic as when to eat ‘ketupat and satay’



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A file photograph shows Home Minister Datuk Seri Saifuddin Nasution Ismail attending the Domestic Security Conference at Marriot Hotel, Putrajaya, on Sept 9, 2024. — Picture by Sayuti Zainudin

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By Muhammad Yusry
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KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 16 — Home Minister Datuk Seri Saifuddin Nasution Ismail today defended a proposed Malay proficiency test for citizenship applications, saying it would be conversational and not a strict interview.

The proposal is part of a constitutional amendment to alter how Malaysian citizenship will be granted, which is currently being debated in Parliament.

“I personally attended the language interview. This interview isn’t just scripted, ‘Can you give your full name? What is your address?’ No. We show them pictures.

“For example, a picture of *muruku* and ask, ‘What celebration is this for?’ They answer, ‘That’s for Deepavali.’ They know.

“We show a picture of *ketupat* and satay, and ask, ‘When do you eat this?’ They respond, ‘During Hari Raya.’ That’s the language test. The full marks is eight, and three or four is the passing score,” he said in a press conference at the Parliament building here.

Saifuddin said that the national language test would be compulsory for those applying for citizenship.

“When we study the issue of citizenship in other countries, the UK has language requirements, the US has them, and Australia does, too. So, if you want to become a Malaysian citizen, there must be language requirements,” he said.

He also said the proposal for Malaysia would be made easier with picture guides, again insisting the testing would be trivial.

Saifuddin said it could be as simple as showing an applicant a photograph of the Petronas Twin Towers, one of Malaysia’s most iconic buildings, and asking if they knew where it was located.

“Auntie, do you know where this is?’ She answers, ‘In Kuala Lumpur.’ She knows about her country, she knows about the celebrations of her country,” he added.

In March, Saifuddin said that the previous set of questions and interview method as prepared and conducted by the Home Ministry and the National Registration Department’s were too rigid.

“We don’t want the interview process to be too regimented or technical, more ‘*santa*’ (relaxed). The interviewees seem to be very nervous, especially those who are above 80,” he said.

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