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Fong: Canning will humiliate pupils

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KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. - The Education Ministry, apprehensive of using caning as a deterrent, feels this practice will only further humiliate a pupil and in the process fail to change his errant ways.

Deputy Education Minister Datuk Dr Fong Chan Onn said today public caning would humiliate a pupil to such an extent that "he will not be able to recover from it and thus be unable to change his ways.

"Caning now is done in the school head's office with only one witness present. It is severe enough because pupils outside can hear what is going on in the room.

"It is already very humiliating for him this way," Fong said after a briefing by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad on social ills and the Multimedia Supercorridor at the Putra World Trade Centre.

Dr Mahathir addressed a gathering of 1,000 Barisan Nasional component party leaders, MPs, State Assemblymen, senators and local councillors.

Fong said the current Education Ministry regulation states that caning could only be meted out by school heads or anyone to whom they delegate this power.

"Boys can be caned on the buttocks or palms but girls cannot be caned at all," he said.

The National Union of Teaching Profession had yesterday suggested that schools enforce public caning to help check the increase in social problems affecting youths.

NUTP secretary-general N. Siva Subramaniam said teachers should be allowed to cane problem pupils. He added that at present, only headmasters and disciplinary teachers could do so.

Siva said pupils who had assaulted principles and teachers, vandalised school and public property, and who were involved in fights should be publicly caned.

"This will deter others from such acts and force them to become more disciplined," he said.

He added that counselling and psychological assistance given to problem pupils were not working, and schools did not take much action when pupils played truant or were absent from school without good reason.

He was commenting on the detention of 78 pupils by the Larut Matang and Selama police who found them patronising an illegal video arcade at the Taping bus terminal on Sunday.

The pupils, aged between 15 and 18, from six schools in the Larut Matang and Selama districts in Perak, were in school uniform when they were picked up.

The Sarawak Teachers' Union had also urged the Education Ministry to reintroduce caning in schools to restore discipline and order among pupils.

Its president William Gani Bina said that if caning were reintroduced, the ministry should draw proper guidelines to ensure that teachers or school heads did not go overboard.

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