

NUTP: Set up tribunal to probe segregation

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By K. SAITHURUKA
and MOSES LOO

KUALA LUMPUR: The National Union of Teaching Profession (NUTP), which yesterday revealed a list of 200 primary and secondary schools that practised streaming according to race, wants the Government to set up a special tribunal to investigate the matter.

The union will submit a memorandum containing the list, complaints and recommendations to the Education Ministry after the Christmas holidays.

Its secretary-general Datuk N. Siva Subramaniam, who disclosed the list to the press yesterday, said the tribunal would give parents an opportunity to explain their unhappiness over their children being placed in third and fourth classes when they deserved to be in top ones.

He said the tribunal would also allow the Government to take proactive measures to solve the problem and to show whether NUTP had been right in bringing up the issue.

"The union will send a letter to Education Minister Tan Sri Musa Mohamad and his two deputies to call for a meeting because we have no trust in Education Director-General Datuk Abdul Rafie Mahat to settle the matter.

"The minister will have to answer why this is happening when he said that there is no policy to segregate students according to race," he said.

He said copies of the memorandum would also be handed over to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and his deputy Datuk Seri

Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

He said some of the schools segregated the students permanently by saying that it was to facilitate the teaching of Islamic Studies for Muslims and Moral for non-Muslims.

Siva Subramaniam said other related complaints included the forcing of schoolchildren to sign pledges to say that they would not take up moral studies as a condition to remain in the top classes and students being denied prizes or awards despite good academic results.

"Among the reasons the schools gave for racial segregation were lack of moral or religious teachers; that they had to follow a quota system; or wanted to have better control of students," he said.

He added that another reason given was the difficulty in arranging the timetable.

Siva Subramaniam said the union also received complaints that certain schools heads carried out their administration according to their respective political beliefs, set up special classes for a specific race and named classes using sensitive words.

Meanwhile, the MTUC called for a stop to criticisms against the NUTP for raising the issue.

Its president Zainal Rampak said that the parties concerned should instead take steps to verify the NUTP report and resolve the matter.

"If not for the NUTP and Siva Subramaniam raising the matter, the issue of segregation of students would have continued and when it becomes large scale, it can no longer be contained," he said.