

Musa draws -analogy for the NUTP's Siva

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PETALING JAYA: Would a teacher advise a student to apologise if the latter has done something wrong? A union leader who was also a teacher has been asked to use this analogy to decide on his own course of action.

Education Minister Tan Sri Musa Mohamad yesterday questioned whether National Union of the Teaching Profession (NUTP) secretary-general Datuk N. Siva Subramaniam would advise the student to apologise or continue to mull over his action.

"Datuk Siva Subramaniam was a teacher himself in the first place so what would he advise the student to do?" he said when asked about the alleged racial segregation in schools controversy.

Deputy Education Minister Datuk Abdul Aziz Shamsuddin was reported in a Bahasa daily on Monday that the ministry would take action against the union leader if he continued

making allegations about segregation in schools.

Last week, a panel headed by Prof Emeritus K. J. Ratnam found there was **no basis** for the claims by the NUTP that pupils were segregated along racial lines in 210 schools it cited.

Musa, who declined to comment on his deputy's statement, said: "There **must** have been some misperceptions along the way. After all, the committee (to study the alleged racial segregation in schools) was formed after an outburst by Siva Subramaniam that 10% of schools in the country practise racial segregation," he told reporters after launching SMK Bandar Sunway's pre-vocational training scheme for its special classes.

Last Thursday, Musa had made the findings of the report public, saying that there is no evidence of any deliberate action or agenda to segregate students along racial lines in the schools cited by the NUTP.

Siva Subramaniam when contacted said the union had decided not to make any more statement on the dispute.

"We are planning to meet Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi on the matter soon," he said.

Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Dr Rais Yatim said heads planning legal action against the NUTP and Siva Subramaniam should weigh the consequences of their action carefully.

He said they had the right to sue if they felt their rights had been impinged upon.

"But they have to give careful consideration to this course of action," he said after opening an exhibition

"Malaysia - Penubuhan dan Cabaran" at the Tunku Abdul Rahman Memorium here yesterday.

He said they needed to establish a *prima facie* (grounds) for the suit and proofs.

"And it is difficult to quantify the damage," he said, adding there was no element of criminality in the matter.

He said the Government believed the disagreement between the two parties could be resolved amicably.

In Shah Alam, Chief Secretary to the Government Tan Sri Datuk Samsudin Osman, when asked, said that he would **not mind mediating** between the NUTP and the Education Ministry if they fail to resolve the matter.

"An amicable solution should be reached so that the issue is not dragged further," he told reporters after opening a seminar on *Islam, Globalisation and the Knowledge Economy: Issues and Challenges* at a hotel here yesterday.

The Malaysian Trades Union Congress (MTUC) called for a discussion between the Education Ministry and the NUTP to settle their differences.

MTUC president Zainal Rampak said there was no point in prolonging the matter since Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had already stated that misunderstanding and the lack of communication were the causes for the differences.

"Let us get on with the nation-building process and not waste our valuable resources and energy on unproductive exercises such as pointing finger," he said in a statement yesterday.

Zainal said the NUTP had not invented the claims.