

Monitor schools closely, Govt urged

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PETALING JAYA: Education unionists have called for more stringent monitoring of schools to prevent any deviation from the national education system.

They said the district education offices and state departments should conduct stricter checks to ensure that school heads adhered to objectives.

National Union of the Teaching Profession secretary-general Datuk N. Siva Subramaniam said policies drawn up at the Federal level often did not reach the schools, leading to many schools "operating outside the national school system."

"The Government, therefore, needs to look at why this occurs and why policies are not implemented at the school level when there are education offices in every district," he said yesterday.

Siva Subramaniam was commenting on Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's assertion that the national education system had strayed from its objectives, resulting in the alienation of non-Muslim students.

In a recent interview, Dr Mahathir had said: "The idea was to set up a school system that would cater to all races in Malaysia. But we find that people who run the schools have other ideas. For example, when we provide for

pupil's own language classes, they try to deny the right of the Chinese and Indians to learn their own languages and they don't make an effort to provide the necessary teachers."

National Union of Tamil Teachers president Shahul Hamid Mydin Shah said some "overzealous" school heads had deterred non-Muslim students from enrolling in national schools, adding that these schools also lacked support for pupil's own language classes.

Due to these factors, he said, many non-Muslim parents preferred to send their children to vernacular schools.

"Education offices at the district and state levels have a lot on their plates. However, something needs to be done," he said.

National Conference of Secondary School Principals president Alimuddin Mohd Dom urged school heads to take stock of the situation at their schools and follow the regulations set by the Government.

"National schools are our mainstream schools and should cater equally to the country's multi-racial community.

"School heads must be sensitive and carry out their duties bearing this in mind. This is the only way we can attract students of all races, especially non-Malay students, to national schools," he said.