

26 MAR 2002

Rais-Siva

SIVA AND MINISTRY SHOULD MEET SAYS RAIS

KUALA LUMPUR, March 26 (Bernama) -- The Education Ministry and Secretary-General of National Union of the Teaching Profession (NUTP) Datuk N. Siva Subramaniam have been advised to hold amicable discussions before proceeding with any legal action.

Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Dr Rais Yatim said the best way was to avoid legal action and to consult with one another in the spirit of goodwill, as suggested by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad recently.

"We cannot see any benefit of bringing the matter to court. The best that they can do is for both parties to meet. And if they still resort to the court after that, then it would be their right," Dr Rais said after launching an exhibition on "Malaysia-Formation and Challenges," at the Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra Memorial here. The exhibition ends on April 27.

The minister also launched two books titled "Indonesia-Malaysia Confrontation" and "Philippines' Claim On North Borneo" during the event.

He was responding to reports on plans by two headmasters in Johor to file a defamation suit against Siva over allegation of racial segregation in some 209 national schools nationwide, including theirs.

On the action that could be taken against Siva, Dr Rais said the Education Ministry could do so under the Publications and Printing Presses Act 1984.

"Headmasters and Parent-Teacher Associations (PIBG) who are not satisfied can also take up civil action against Siva but I suggest they study the "cause of action" in detail before proceeding," he said.

Meanwhile Chief Secretary to the Government Tan Sri Samsudin Osman also advised both parties to abide by the Prime Minister's advice to resolve the matter immediately in a spirit of goodwill.

"The matter should be resolved amicably," Samsudin told the media after launching a one-day seminar titled "Globalisation and Knowledge-based Economy: Issues and Challenges" organised by the International Institute of Public Policy and Management (Inpuma) here.

In GUA MUSANG, Deputy Education Minister Datuk Abdul Aziz Samsuddin called on school heads who are not satisfied with the allegations of racial segregation in national schools to discuss the matter with Siva.

He said the matter should be discussed in a harmonious and amicable manner to avoid dragging the issue to court.

"The best way to resolve this issue is to bring it to the negotiating table to avoid prolonging it and to prevent suits and counter-suits," he told the media here.

While the ministry could not prevent the school heads from taking legal action, he hoped they would resort to other channels to resolve the issue.

So far two headmasters had indicated they would file legal action while three more will decide in the next two days.

The deputy minister hoped NUTP would learn from the incident.

He had earlier opened the Parent-Teacher Association meeting and Silver Jubilee celebrations at the Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Tengku Indera Putera here.

--BERNAMA

RAR ANA