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Backing for Siva, NUTP over issue of segregation

KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. - Various organisations today came to the support of National Union of the Teaching Profession secretary-general Datuk N. Siva Subramaniam, saying that he should not be blamed for the "racial segregation in schools" episode.

They said criticism, if any, should be levelled at the union and not individuals.

The Malaysian Civil Society Network (Jarimas) said Siva Subramaniam should not be subjected to "blind" criticism.

The detractors should stop condemning NUTP and Siva Subramaniam as the matter was being blown out of proportion.

Jarimas chairman and Malaysian Youth Council president Saifuddin Abdullah said the coalition of six national civil society organisations felt the issue should be addressed in the right perspective and not by side-lining the crux of the issue.

"Such haste in condemning Siva Subramaniam and threatening legal action against him and NUTP would only complicate matters. Those concerned should handle the matter in a more rational, calm and professional manner," Saifuddin said in a statement today.

It was unfair to accuse NUTP and Siva Subramaniam before the teachers' union and its leader could provide a clarification.

"How could they make a stand when they have not obtained the report prepared by Independent Committee on Racial Segregation in Schools," Saifuddin asked.

Apart from the Malaysian Youth Council, Jarimas groups Cuepacs, the Federation of Malaysian Consumer Associations (Fomca), Malaysian Trades Union Congress (MTUC), GAPENA and the National Council of Womens Organisation.

Jarimas which supports Cuepacs' in trying to resolve the matter amicably, also urged the parties not to churn out additional issues. It would make matters worse.

"The real issue is not Siva Subramaniam's refusal to apologise or his arrogance (as claimed), but NUTP has not received the report."

Saifuddin said the Independent Committee had proposed that the Education Ministry give serious attention and conduct in-depth studies on how racial integration could be made the cornerstone of the national education system.

However, he said the fact remained that while the committee said there was no deliberate racial segregation, it made seven proposals to improve racial integration, including the method for streaming, and that tuition classes should be for all races.

"The crux of the matter is that NUTP raised a very serious issue and those concerned should initiate systematic studies and discussions ... not sensationalise," he added.

In Malacca, the State NUTP head Mohd Ali Mohd Ibrahim urged the Education Ministry and its officers not to use the findings to exact revenge against the union and Siva Subramaniam.

He said the NUTP had earlier highlighted the issue of racial segregation for the betterment of education.

"The ministry and its staff should not make the committee's findings an excuse to take revenge on the union or Siva Subramaniam.

"The NUTP has a membership of over 110,000 teachers and the union does

not want to make them (teachers) distrust the officers or the ministry itself," he added.

NUTP president Tengku Habsah Tengku Petera said:

"I want to reiterate our stand that NUTP is totally behind Siva Subramaniam in this matter. The NUTP will seek a meeting with the minister after the Ketari election to resolve the matter."

She said Cuepacs officials headed by its deputy president (1) Nordin Abdul Hamid would meet them on Friday to get more information. NUTP would abide by Cuepacs' decision on the matter, as NUTP was its affiliate.

In Shah Alam, Chief Secretary to the Government Tan Sri Samsudin Osman said the NUTP and all parties should move to resolve this issue amicably.

He said the issue had dragged on for too long.

"I concur with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad that there had been a misunderstanding. It has to be cleared quickly and amicably," he said.

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