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Tamil schools will die natural death, says Kayveas

KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. - People's Progressive Party president Datuk M. Kayveas, who is embroiled in a controversy over Tamil schools, today predicted that "more and more" of these schools will be consolidated "and, in the end, be closed down".

In a clarification of his statement last week, allegedly suggesting that these schools be closed down, Kayveas maintained that he made no such proposal because there was no reason to.

"The rate the Tamil schools are progressing, they will die a natural death themselves. There is no need to close them down," he told a Press conference at the Housing and Local Government Ministry, of which Kayveas is Deputy Minister.

He said he had learnt that in the near future, another 250 Tamil schools would be consolidated.

Last week, he was quoted in Sin Chew Jit Poh as saying that Tamil schools should be closed because they found it difficult to develop talent for the country and many were operating under very trying conditions.

His statement angered many national Indian leaders, including MIC president Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu, who warned Kayveas that Tamil education was a sensitive issue.

Subsequently, four police reports were lodged against Kayveas, alleging that his statement was seditious.

Kayveas described the response to his statement as "overreacting by some leaders" and "senseless Kayveas-bashing".

He said that the PPP was only concerned that the use of the Tamil language was slowly diminishing in the country, and that in another 10 to 20 years, it might no longer be used at all by Malaysian Indians.

Kayveas said that in Perak alone, there are 99 Tamil schools with fewer than 150 pupils. The others with similarly lean enrolments are 31 schools in Pahang; 43 in Selangor; one in Kelantan; 47 in Johor; 39 in Kedah; 15 in Malacca; 35 in Negri Sembilan; 13 in Penang; one in Perlis and six in Kuala Lumpur.

These schools are out of the total 523 nationwide.

Of these, 60 are Governmentaided while the rest are privately owned.

Kayveas asked why, if certain political parties were championing Tamil schools, there was not one Tamil secondary school or college.

"If everything was perfectly fine for the Indians here, then why are there so many gangsters from the community and why are Indians slowly becoming third-class citizens here?"

Kayveas also said that those who "blindly" lodged police reports against him had not understood what he meant.

He warned that he would be lodging a police report against them for lodging allegedly false reports against him.

"In my opinion, these irresponsible quarters are merely trying to politicise the issue and gain personal mileage for themselves," he said.

Kayveas said the PPP would be handing over a memorandum to the Education Ministry urging Tamil be made a compulsory subject in the country's education system.

He also said that it would make no difference for Tamil school pupils to attend national schools if Tamil was taught as a compulsory subject.

"Even in Tamil schools now, the language is only taught as a single subject and pupils only have one examination paper on Tamil for the Ujian

Penilaian Sekolah Rendah examinations.

"What is the difference if they were to go to national schools, where they can still learn Tamil and sit for it in the UPSR examinations?

"In national schools, they are assured of better teaching and even sporting facilities," he said.

Kayveas said he was prepared to retire from politics if anyone could prove what he said was untrue.

He said the PPP had set up a team in each State to compile data on Tamil schools and would submit a working paper to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

He said Pemuda PPP had also started a "Save the Tamil language campaign", and urged the country's two top Tamil dailies, Tamil Nesan and Malaysian Nanban, to raise their cover prices by 10 sen, which he said should be donated to a special fund to save the Tamil language.