

**Literature text sparks anger among ethnic Indians**  
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Malaysia's largest Indian party has called for a textbook to be withdrawn from the curriculum over a reference to the caste system, a report said Monday, in a case highlighting the country's strained race relations.

The Malay-language book 'Interlok', is from this year to become compulsory reading for high school students, but the Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC) said it contained a chapter which was offensive to the ethnic group.

Written by a national laureate, the book covers the history of integration of Malaysia's three main races - Malays, Chinese and Indians - from the 1900s until independence in 1957.

The Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC) protested against a chapter linking the community to the caste system, which it said is outdated, and want the government to withdraw the book or remove the passages touching on the system.

"This issue does not affect us anymore and we do not want to be reminded of such things," MIC president G Palanivel said, according to Star newspaper Monday.

"We are holding strong to our stance that the sensitive portion touching on the Indian community should be removed from the book," he said.

The Education Ministry said it will hear complaints from Indian leaders before making a decision on the fate of the book.

"We have not received the (complaint) letter. We will get the professional views on this matter," Deputy Education Minister Wee Ka Siong told AFP.

"Our intention is to make our people united and live harmoniously," he said.

The caste system divided Hindus into four main groups according to their work and social status. It has been widely criticised as a form of discrimination and is outlawed in India.

Ethnic Indians make up less than 10 percent of Malaysia's 28 million population and have long complained that they are disadvantaged by policies helping majority Muslim Malays.