

**NGOs want to meet PM, 'novel not for young minds'**  
**Malaysiakini.com**  
**January 29, 2011**

The Malaysia Hindu Sangham (MHS) today demanded that the government immediately withdraw the novel 'Interlok' from the national school syllabus.

MHS president RS Mohan Shan added that the government should also remove those sitting in the Education Ministry's syllabus committee.

He accused the committee of misleading Education Minister and Deputy Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin (left) in his decision to maintain 'Interlok' as a textbook for the Form Five's Bahasa Malaysia literature class, albeit with some amendments.

Mohan said the committee had failed to study the potential impact the novel would have on secondary school students, pointing out that the MHS strongly feels it is not suitable for young minds.

"The government should come up with a new (committee) line-up that has a multi-racial make-up. It must really study the impact (of the novel on teenagers)," he said at a press conference after chairing a discussion with 60 Indian NGOs at Wisma MHS.

Mohan said all Indian elected representatives across the nation should also come out with a united voice to state the Indian community's opposition against the use of 'Interlok' as a secondary school reference.

"We don't care which party they are from... They are our representatives in parliament and the state assemblies, and they should express our dissatisfaction and voice it out together."

Mohan said their position against the use of the book in schools has been very clear from the start of the controversy surrounding the novel, written by national laureate Abdullah Hussein.

**Don't burn book, Niat says**

If the government does not fulfill their demands, Mohan said the MHS - with the support of other Indian NGOs - will be "forced" to take their protests public.

While he declined to speak in detail, he noted that this will involve hosting nationwide roadshows to explain the situation to the Indian community.

"This will be systematically done, but we do not want violence. We will hold peaceful protests," he said.

National Interlok Action Team (Niat) chairperson Thasleem Mohamed Ibrahim Al-Haj said the issue needs to be approached "intellectually and diplomatically", in their bid to push for the book's withdrawal from the national school syllabus.

"It is not about just 10 words, it's the whole storyline which reflects the Indian community at large, which I personally find derogatory, insulting and disgusting.

"(The government must) make sure a proper panel is appointed and the views of the Indian community are considered," he said.

Mohan however urged the Indian community to keep calm and avoid taking drastic measures, such as burning the novel, in showing their displeasure.

"We are totally against that (book burning). We appeal to the Indian community not go to that extent... Don't indulge in such acts," he urged.

### **Need for RCI on Kugan**

When asked to comment on the recent call by the family of A Kugan for a royal commission of inquiry into his death while in police custody, MHS advisor A Vaithilingam (right) said this should be the next logical step after the string of deaths in detention over the past two years.

He said police procedures must be reviewed following claims that detainees are not given the opportunity to meet their lawyers or relatives, or even make a phone call.

"This means from the time they are detained till they are brought to the courts, we have no idea what kind of treatment they are given while in the lock-up.

"Considering the situation, and especially after the Teoh Beng Hock death in detention, I think it (RCI) is necessary," he said.

Vaithilingam noted that while this issue was not discussed in detail at today's forum, it was agreed that the apparent spike in the number of deaths in detention - especially involving Indian youths - merits greater attention.

Meanwhile, the National Interlok Action Team will be hosting a hunger strike tomorrow to protest against the book's use as a Malay literary reference in secondary schools.

The protest fast will be held from 10am to 7pm at Little India in Brickfields.

Copyright © 1999-2007 Mkini Dotcom Sdn. Bhd.  
Source : <http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/154859>