

Perkasa crosses swords with Chinese groups

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Malay rights group Perkasa has crossed swords with Chinese associations over the movement calling for the restoration of the late Chinese educationist Lim Lian Geok's citizenship.

The 'Justice for Lim Lian Geok' movement was launched by LLG Cultural Development Centre, a Chinese education NGO led by former Gerakan leader and Penang exco member Toh Kin Woon, and supported by major Chinese associations.

However, Perkasa is claiming that the movement is seditious and threatened to make a police report against the organisers.

It also demanded that the citizenship of the organisers be revoked and that their names be removed from the electoral roll.

"Perkasa views seriously the incessant demands by the Chinese community to urge the government to give equality to their schools.

"They have forgotten that the government has been good to them, allowing Chinese vernacular schools to continue to operate," says a statement published on Perkasa's official website.

It says that the LLG movement is being organised at a time when the government is weak, and indicated that there are attempts to instill communist ideology to incite the Chinese community. Therefore they should be charged with sedition," the statement adds. Lim (1901-1985) was considered by the Chinese community as the most revered Chinese educationist in Malaysian history. He was the president of the United Chinese Schools Teachers' Association (Jiao Zong).

He had consistently fought for fair and equal treatment for vernacular schools and opposed the government's move to forcibly switch the medium of instruction of Chinese secondary schools to English in the 1950s.

This had led to his citizenship and teaching permit being revoked in 1961. When he died in 1985, the Chinese community bestowed upon him the honour of 'The Soul of Malaysian Chinese' or zu hun in Chinese.

In conjunction with the 50th anniversary of the revocation of his citizenship, the Chinese associations came together to remember Lim through a postcard signature campaign, a public forum, exhibitions, a movie screening and a theatrical performance.

The movement has two purposes - to get Lim's citizenship restored and promulgate an Education Equality Act to ensure equal and fair treatment to mother tongue education.

'Campaign is a peaceful civil rights movement'

Responding to Perkasa's allegations, the LLG Cultural Development Centre maintained that the campaign is a rational, legal and peaceful civil rights movement.

In a statement released yesterday, it cited Article 8(1) and Article 8(2) of the federal constitution which guarantees equality to all citizens regardless of religion, descent, race, place of birth or gender.

Hence the current policy of only building national schools but neglecting vernacular schools is in fact unconstitutional discrimination, the statement says.

"The call by Perkasa to revoke the citizenship of the organisers does not make sense and is an insult to the constitution which is the nation's highest law.

"Perkasa claimed it is protecting bumiputra rights but in fact they have crossed the constitutional border and violated the rights of non-bumiputras," it adds.

The NGO also denied any attempt to indoctrinate communist ideology and incite the Chinese community.

Citizenship revocation a serious injustice

"The revocation of Lim's citizenship is a serious injustice in Malaysia history. It has become a symbol of oppression and discrimination on Chinese education."

"If justice is done for Lim, it would show that the government has admitted its previous mistake. We will continue to fight for justice for Lim and equality for mother tongue education, no matter if it will take 50, 100 or 200 years!"

The stance was supported by another 50 Chinese youth associations, which condemned Perkasa for maliciously distorting the campaign to create racial chaos.

"The campaign wishes to acknowledge the late Lim's spirit which demands that every citizen should have the right to mother tongue education and equal resources from the government.

"This is unlike what Perkasa has allegedly claimed that this campaign contains seditious and hidden agendas which violate the constitution.

"On the contrary, the malicious accusation made by Perkasa is the one which contains seditious and hidden agendas," says a joint statement endorsed by 50 youth associations from all states.