

Officer: Yes, dept sent out memo on voter registration

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By Wong Teck Chi & Lee Long Hui

The Selangor Department of Education did send out a memo asking district education officers to report on the "voter registration status of teachers" and this was based on a directive from the Education Ministry.

A department officer, who did not want to be named, reiterated to Malaysiakini today that the directive came from the Ministry of Education - which deputy minister Wee Ka Siong had earlier denied at a press conference when the issue was raised.

NONE"The Ministry of Education never issued any directive, nor gave any instructions to the Department of Education to inquire into the political inclinations of teachers," Wee (right) said.

"Voting is secret. Do you think the teachers will tell you who are they voting for? Don't be silly," he said.

The memo was brought to public attention by Serdang MP Teo Nie Ching, who revealed the document at a press conference at the Parliament lobby today.

The memo, signed by the department's academic management section head Hasnul Hadi Abdullah Sani, was addressed to all deputy district education officers in Selangor.

Dated March 22, it was attached to a form requiring the officers to list the number of teachers in each school, the total number of registered as voters, as well as their parliamentary and state constituencies.

When the Selangor department officer was asked about Wee's denial, he responded, "That's normal. This is politics."

He said the matter had been discussed at a "management meeting", but he declined to reveal the seniority level of the attendees, concerned that such information could expose his identity.

'No meant to intimidate teachers'

However, the officer denied that the memo was meant to for the department to survey the teacher's parliamentary and state assembly constituencies.

NONEHe explained that it was for the use of school heads to determine whether the teachers had registered as voters, and encourage those who have not to do so.

"The government is running a campaign to encourage voter registration, especially as not all teachers are registered as voters," he said.

The officer denied that the forms were meant to intimidate teachers in that their voting preference would be watched by the government.

It was merely to encourage teachers to register to vote, he stressed, adding that "we don't have (any intention to intimidate). Even if we know (their voting preference), we can't do anything."

The officer added that the issue of teachers unregistered as voters was quite serious and that in one school with 100 teachers, 20 were not.

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