

NGOs to send memo to PM on vernacular schools
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By Kow Gah Chie

A memorandum of demands will be sent to Prime Minister Najib Razak at the end of this month by several Chinese NGOs, including the influential Chinese education movement Dong Zong, or the United Chinese School Committees Association.

Eight Chinese NGOs have set up a working committee to draft the memorandum, said Dong Zong chairperson Yap Sin Tian at a press conference after a meeting yesterday.

NONEYap (right) said the groups are seeking to resolve the perennial shortage of teachers and for government funds to be allocated systematically to allow Chinese schools to be built according to needs.

The memorandum will also recommend that the government gives recognition to the Unified Examination Certificate (UEC) which is issued by Chinese schools, said Yap.

Yap also said the working committee will meet again before the final draft is completed and the memorandum will be sent to the premier as well as all political parties.

The Chinese NGOs involved include Jiao Zong, Hua Zong, The Associated Chinese Chambers of Commerce and Industry of Malaysia (ACCCIM) and others.

Najib and Mahathir not alike

Meanwhile, Dong Zong deputy chairperson Chow Siew Hon dismissed the suggestion that history will repeat itself over the memorandum of demand.

In 1999, Chinese NGOs through a coalition called Suqiu (Malaysian Chinese Organisations' Election Appeals Committee) had submitted a 17-point memorandum to the government on the eve of a crucial general election.

NONESoon after winning the election, then premier Dr Mahathir Mohamad lambasted Suqiu, likening the actions of the movement to those of the communists in the past as well as the terrorist group, Al-Ma'unah.

Mahathir claimed that Suqiu sought to do away with the special position of the Malays. He also argued that Suqiu could destroy the government's efforts in promoting good ties among the various races in Malaysia.

"Najib and Mahathir are different. Najib is more open. In his three years as premier, he has adopted some liberal policies, including the 1Malaysia concept," said Chow.