

PM to meet Dong Zong on Monday

MalaysiaKini.com

March 29, 2013

By The Malay Mail

After meeting the Hindu rights movement Hindraf on Tuesday, the prime minister is preparing to meet another tough critic, the United Chinese School Committees Association of Malaysia (Dong Zong).

These meetings are seen by analysts as Najib Abdul Razak's effort to close the divide among various sections of the community, including those deemed radical and even critical of the administration long before he took over the helm.

Dong Zong chairperson Yap Sin Tian (right) confirmed that a meeting will take place in Putrajaya on Monday, but said a time has yet to be confirmed.

"We are happy that the prime minister has agreed to meet us, as this was what he promised earlier," Yap said, alluding to Najib's historical attendance of Dong Zong's Chinese New Year open house on Feb 17.

At that function, the prime minister said he was willing to meet Dong Zong at a different time to discuss issues of concern to the association.

Dong Zong had brought up three pertinent issues that it wants the government to address: recognition for the Unified Examination Certificate (UEC), the setting up of more Chinese independent schools, and a review of the National Education Blueprint (NEB) 2013-2025.

"It is good that the prime minister is reaching out, but it would be too soon to say anything until the meeting takes place," said Yap.

He had praised Najib's "inclusive leadership" by breaking bread with Dong Zong during Chinese New Year — a first in Dong Zong's 50-year history, and now agreeing to thrash out the difficult issues.

By "giving face" to the prime minister, Yap had earned the wrath from some Dong Zong members, as well as individual politicians and other groups.

However, he has been steadfast in his belief that rallies, memos and demonstrations must now be replaced with dialogues, especially with a prime minister who has been reaching out to Dong Zong despite political risks.

Meanwhile, Hindraf deputy chairperson SW Sambulingam (left) was reported to be optimistic following Tuesday's hour-long meeting at the Prime Minister's Office, with Najib saying social and economic issues concerning the Indian community must be addressed.

