

## **'Stop banning non-Muslim societies in schools'**

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The Education Ministry has been urged to quickly resolve the ban imposed on the formation of non-Muslim religious societies in national schools once and for all.

"This is not an isolated issue. The matter is getting worse. Schools in Penang as well are facing this problem," MCA central committee member Loh Seng Kok told a press conference in Kuala Lumpur today.

He said the situation was made known to him by various religious society representatives who had received complaints on the matter.

The state Education Department was aware of the matter, he said, adding not only Pakatan Rakyat states were affected but also BN-ruled states.

NONE "Why can't the matter be resolved as quickly, as was done at Klang High School?" he asked.

Loh also called for fairer treatment by including non-Muslim associations in the co-curricular activities listed in the co-curriculum management guidelines issued to schools.

"As for now, only Islamic religious societies are listed in the guidelines," he said.

He also called for a stop to conflicting interpretations and decisions that went against the co-curriculum implementation policy.

The issue was brought to light when an English tabloid earlier this month reported the closure of Klang High School's Buddhist, Hindu and Christian associations.

Content of ministry circular 'misunderstood'

Certain quarters have argued that this was a misunderstanding of the circular Bil.20/2000 issued by the Education Ministry in 2000, which said all school societies must be registered with the state education departments.

On July 13, it was reported that Deputy Education Minister Wee Ka Siong claimed that the Klang High School administration had misinterpreted the content of the circular.

The circular stated that non-Muslim religious societies formed before the year 2000 did not have to be dissolved.

NONE However, Loh (left) argued that all societies, regardless of the year in which they were formed, should be given fair and equal treatment.

"This issue is very serious, to the extent that some teachers have been transferred to other schools because they were active in Christian fellowship activities in their schools," said a now retired teacher who had been in the field for about 30 years.

The teacher, who did not want to be named, claimed that no reason was given for the transfers.

"In 1998, I personally received a directive from my former superior to cease all Christian fellowship activities in the school. When I asked for a reason, I wasn't given one," she added.

Also present were Young Buddhist Association of Malaysia vice-president Loh Yit Phing, Subang Jaya Buddhist Association president Chim Siew Choon, MCA Religious Affairs deputy chief Raymond Low and Christian Federation of Malaysia executive secretary Tan Kong Beng.

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