

**Gerakan: Language society barred by school**  
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Barely a week has passed since the outcry over the dissolution by two schools of their non-Muslim societies has died down after the societies were reinstated.

Another controversy may be arising, however, although this time it concerns a Chinese-language society in a school in Subang Jaya.

dominic lau hoe chaiAccording to Gerakan Youth secretary-general Dominic Lau, the school's headmaster had refused to allow the establishment of a Chinese society out of concern that this would lead to students abandoning the other societies to join this new association.

Protesting this, Lau said: "The headmaster did not base his decision from an academic perspective nor did he put his student's development as priority".

Lau alleged further that the prohibition against the set-up of language societies also happens in public universities.

"Consequently, the students themselves have to establish the societies in secret," said Lau.

Arguing for the language-based societies, Lau said such associations are created by those who with the love for a particular language, and have nothing to do with race and beliefs.

"If the (students of) other races are interested, they are welcome to participate. This enables every race to respect each other and live harmoniously," said Lau.

"Besides, under the protection of the country's constitution, every race should enjoy the freedom of spreading their beliefs and cultures.

"Establishing a Chinese society does not only enable the Chinese to inherit the essence of Chinese culture, but also enabled the other races to have a better understanding of Chinese culture. This corresponds with the 1Malaysia Concept," he said.

Lau also called for parents and teachers associations in schools to get involved and contribute their views on the matter so that more informed decisions can be reached by the authorities.

Earlier this month, it was reported that the Selangor education department had issued a circular for the closure of Klang High School's Buddhist, Hindu and Christian associations.

However, Deputy Prime Minister and Education Minister Muhyiddin Yassin has since explained that circular Bil.20/2000 issued by the Education Ministry, which said that all school societies must be registered with state education departments, had been misunderstood, and clubs formed before the year 2000 would not be affected.

Last week, the cabinet was reported to have decided that the setting up of non-Muslim societies in schools need only the approval of school heads.

It was also clarified that students can apply to form a society if there were at least 15 interested members.

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