

Task force to probe 'racial slur' allegations

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PUTRAJAYA – Did the principal cast a racial slur or not? The Education Ministry has formed a task force to get to the bottom of a volatile situation that blew up last week.

“We want to find out the facts. Right now, the reactions have been very emotional,” Deputy Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin said of the case involving a school principal in Johor who was alleged to have made racial slurs against her students.

The task force would be headed by muhyiddin-students-2 the ministry’s deputy secretary-general (management) Dr Rosli Mohamed.

As an interim measure, he said the principal of the secondary school had been asked to go on leave.

Muhyiddin, who is also Education Minister, said the measures taken by the ministry must be fair and based on facts.

“There are contrasting claims on what she had said,” he said after chairing a Cabinet committee meeting on human capital development.

Muhyiddin said the ministry needed more details before taking further disciplinary action although the principal had apologised.

He added that as a senior civil servant on DG48 grade, the principal would have to be referred to the Public Service Department.

The headmistress was alleged to have made racist remarks to a multi-racial group of students during a pre-Merdeka celebration event on Aug 12, calling the non-Malays penumpang.

About 50 parents and students have lodged reports against her.

The MIC Youth has submitted a memorandum to the ministry urging action against the principal.

“Stern action must be taken as this incident cannot be brushed off as a simple misunderstanding,” said its secretary C. Shivarajah, who handed over the memorandum to Ruslan Atan, the special officer to Deputy Prime Minister and Education Minister.

The school has about 2,200 students and 150 teachers, with about 40% non-Malays.

Also present at the memorandum handover was MCA National Youth Strategic Planning Research Bureau chief Neil Foo Seck Chyn, who said he was participating in the spirit of Barisan Nasional Youth.

“This is a very serious matter and strong action must be taken,” said Foo.

A similar case emerged in Sungai Petani on Thursday when a principal of a school here scolded non-Malay students for eating outside the school canteen.

The Kedah education department will organise a meeting to be held between parents and authorities of the school following complaints against the principal.

"We will call a meeting soon on the matter, involving him, the parent-teacher association and parents of the students concerned," department director Shahidan Abd Rahman said yesterday.

In the incident, the principal had allegedly scolded 10 Form Three students for eating outside the school canteen at about 7am before classes began.

The students were eating outside because the lights in the canteen were not switched on.

The principal had purportedly told them off for "not respecting" their Muslim friends and that they "should return to their country of origin if they did not show such respect".

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