

After 50 years, a new way to tighten school discipline

• By Koh Lay Chin
laych@nst.com.my

PUTRAJAYA: For the first time in nearly half a century, the way five million schoolchildren are to be disciplined is going to change.

And in keeping with the times, caning and suspension will be decided by a disciplinary committee instead of just the headmaster. The Education Ministry feels that this move will satisfy parents who are protective over their children and who want more transparency in the disciplinary process in schools.

Under changes to the Education Rules (School Discipline), disciplinary committees have to be set up in all 10,000 schools in the country. Headmasters and teachers will sit on the committee.

Deputy Education Minister Datuk Hon Choon Kim said: "They will be given licence to tighten discipline based on the regulations we have set.

"We have issued guidelines in the past but this is a step to consolidate all our efforts when it comes to discipline."

The amendments are now being studied by the Attorney-General's Chambers.

Other proposed changes include putting down in writing the appeal process for students who are suspended or expelled. Currently, everything is on an ad hoc basis, with some schools having a detailed appeal process and others having none. Again, this move is aimed at making the disciplinary process more transparent.

Over the years, teachers and parents have voiced concern over the rise in cases of indiscipline in schools. These acts include unruly behaviour in class, truancy, theft, vandalism, bullying and extortion.

The changes will include the 54



Though these students are merely play acting, bullying is a serious and painful experience for many.

residential schools in the country. In recent years, there has been a spate of serious and much-publicised incidence of indiscipline in hostels.

In 2004, Mohd Farid Ibrahim, a 16-year-old student died after being assaulted by his hostel mates in Sekolah Menengah Agama

Dato Klana Petra Maamor in Seremban.

Hon said that residential school students hauled up for indiscipline will not be allowed to stay in the hostel while investigations are ongoing.

"This differs from suspension as the student is not only disal-

lowed from attending classes, they' cannot come to school and influence students.

"So if they are in full boarding or residential schools, they have to stay out."

The head warden in residential schools would also be given more power to discipline students.