

Lee to meet Najib over NS woes

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KUALA LUMPUR: The National Service Training Council (NSTC) chairman Tan Sri Lee Lam Thye will meet Datuk Seri Najib Razak in an effort to overcome the weaknesses in the National Service (NS) training programme that was severely criticised recently over poor transportation.

Lee, who is upset over the incident, which beset the departure of NS trainees recently, said he would be meeting the deputy prime minister on his return from overseas on Jan 14 to give his views on the National Service Training Department (NSTD).

"I wish to convey my view that the programme can run smoothly if the officers, camp commandants and NSTD staff carry out their duties with utmost responsibility.

"Otherwise I'm worried that a lot more disappointment will crop up and this will tarnish the image of NS, a noble programme for the younger

generation," he said here today.

The departure of NS trainees to their camps on Jan 1 were marred when buses did not show up at Kota Baru, Alor Star, Penang and several places causing the trainees to return home.

Lee said he had asked NSTD to instruct commandants at 78 camps throughout the country to ensure that there were no hitches at their camps which could tarnish the NS image.

He said the department must ensure that the security and health of the trainees were taken care of.

"The commandant and his staff must monitor all the activities in the camp. The commandants are fully responsible for the management of the NS programme at their camps."

On the transportation quandary, Lee said he had reminded the department three weeks earlier to ensure that there should not be any delay in sending the trainees to the camps.

"I was told by the department that it would be taken care of but what had happened on Jan 1 was the the opposite and had tarnished our image."

Lee said the functions of the NSTD and NSTC were different but the public and the media pointed their finger at him whenever things went wrong.

The NSTD, headed by a director-general, executes the decisions made by the Defence Minister as well NSTC, he said, adding that the NSTC, that he chairs, was not responsible in choosing the bus operators, and deciding whether they had enough buses or had acquired travel permits as they were under the ambit of the NSTD.

"What had happened boils down to dishonesty. The National Service is a question of integrity and to what extent we can carry out the trust so that parents and trainees have faith in the programme." — Bernama