

Ka Siong: I'll quit if that solves Chinese teacher shortage
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By Shannon Teoh

KUALA LUMPUR, March 26 — Datuk Wee Ka Siong said he is willing to quit as deputy education minister if it can solve the teacher shortage in Chinese primary schools.

The MCA Youth Chief was chased out and nearly assaulted after a rally by Chinese educationists yesterday where the United Chinese School Committees Association (Dong Zong) accused the government of compromising Chinese education by “deliberately” not training enough Chinese school teachers.

“There are other ways to solve this issue. Would jeering and hurling abuses resolve the shortage?”

“And if stepping down would solve this issue once and for all, I, Wee Ka Siong would immediately do so,” the Star quoted him as saying at an MCA dinner in Malacca last night.

Wee (picture) was chased away and narrowly escaped being punched by an attendee after a rally protesting the lack of Chinese school teachers turned angry.

They had called on him to resign when he arrived and as he left, with Wee claiming protesters also threw water bottles at him.

He said last night said he was only “lightly hit on the face” and “this is not our culture”.

Dong Zong president Yap Sin Tian said at the rally, which drew a crowd of over 5,000, that the education ministry had not trained enough Chinese school teachers so it could send in those without SPM Mandarin qualifications to fill the gap.

Yap said the ministry’s motive was to cause a gradual change the identity of Chinese primary schools by shifting the language of administration and medium of instruction.

“For the last 30 to 40 years, the problem has remained unresolved. Therefore, it can only be concluded that the ministry does not intend to settle the problem not because of lack of ability but because of lack of will.”

Datuk Seri Najib Razak had announced on Thursday more Mandarin-speaking teachers will be trained to solve the shortage but Dong Zong still proceeded with the rally at its Kajang headquarters.

The prime minister said the government was committed to resolving the problem and had appointed Wee to speak to Chinese educationist groups to come up with a solution.

It was also reported that the Education Ministry had placed 1,482 temporary teachers in Chinese schools nationwide since January to address the shortage.

Wee had said there were only 392 vacancies left and headmasters needed to appoint

temporary teachers according to their requirements.

The Ayer Hitam MP also stressed last night MCA would go all out to solve the Chinese education issue and the party's interest in the matter was no less than those who attended the demonstration.

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