

"Canteen in shower room" a permanent arrangement decided in March, says SK Seri Pristana's PTA
Malaysian Insider
July 25 , 2013
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Using the shower room as an extension to the canteen at SK Seri Pristana was going to be a permanent arrangement, said a member of the school's parent-teacher association.

Major Hardeep Singh told The Malaysian Insider that the four-year-old school could not cope with the enrolment and had decided on this move in March at the association's annual general meeting.

When asked if the shower room was going to be the permanent spot for the canteen extension, Hardeep said: "Yes".

PTA chairman Hussein Mohd Ariff acknowledged that this arrangement had been in effect since March when pupils were ordered to use the shower room to have their recess meals.

"The canteen was not closed for 'renovations' then. It was still open," said Hussein.

It is now understood that the "renovation" only entailed changing a wooden door into a glass door which leads to the teachers' eating room.

It is also learnt that the canteen was closed since the beginning of the fasting month and work to replace the door began on July 17 and was completed a week later.

The decision to open the shower room was made by the headmaster, Mohamad Nasir Mohd Noor, at the PTA's AGM.

"He gave the parents time to deliberate over the matter and when no one objected, the school went ahead and opened the shower room," said Hussein.

Hussein told The Malaysian Insider that he would have immediately informed the school not to have the shower room open for dining had any parent stepped forward to object.

"All the pupils, including the Muslims, had used the shower room during recess before the fasting month.

"It's just that when Ramadan started, the shower room continued to be used by the non-Muslim pupils," he said.

Hussein insisted that no form of malice or discrimination was intended in the issue which has thrust the school into bad light.

He also said the PTA was not given enough time to react to the matter when it was blown wide open by parents.

"If only the parents had approached us with their concerns, I would have rushed to stop the shower room being used as a canteen.

"Instead, it has gone viral on social media and the issue has now turned racial for some," he

added.

On Wednesday, Deputy Education Minister P. Kamalanathan visited the school and claimed that the issue was now settled after he was briefed by the school authorities.

He claimed that it had nothing to do with race or religion and gave the school RM10,000 to renovate its canteen. He also ordered that the shower room be closed and not used as a canteen in future. - July 26, 2013

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