

Harassed out of school - more non-Muslim students leaving Seri Pristana
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At least three non-Muslim pupils have left SK Seri Pristana in Sungai Buloh and 10 others are to follow - the result of alleged intimidation following the shower room incident.

The three who left earlier claimed they were intimidated and bullied by school authorities after the issue of non-Muslim pupils being ordered to have their recess in the school's shower room surfaced.

At a Press conference today, it was revealed that the parents of 10 other non-Muslim pupils will be transferring their children out of the school following the arrest of a parent for allegedly intimidating the headmaster.

Non-governmental organisation Malaysia Tamilan Today Welfare Association national secretary K. Gunasegaran said these parents have lost all faith in the school's headmaster and teachers.

"We don't see any other way as these pupils are being harassed and bullied in the school, just because their parents spoke up," he said.

There are 25 non-Muslim pupils among the 1,400 enrolled at the school.

Seri Pristana was at the centre of controversy last month after a parent, Guneswari Kelly, uploaded a picture of non-Muslim pupils eating in the shower room. It was said that the directive to the students came from the headmaster.

The picture went viral and created an uproar among the public.

Even though the controversy was resolved - the school canteen was reopened for the students' use - things did not get back to normal for Guneswari's daughter. She was reportedly intimidated and bullied by both teachers and students. Eventually, Guneswari transferred her daughter to a Tamil school.

At least 10 parents have lodged reports against the school on similar charges of intimidation and bullying but police have said that there was no criminal intent and the matter was transferred to the Education Department.

In a twist of events yesterday, a parent, V. Kumancan, was arrested for allegedly threatening headmaster Mohd Nasir Mohd Noor.

He had allegedly gone to the school on July 25 at 2.30pm but Kumancan denied the accusation, saying he was working at the time.

However, Gunasegaran revealed that Kumancan's boss told police that the latter had not been to work for two weeks around the date in question.

The 31-year-old was later released on police bail but is expected to be charged with criminal intimidation soon.

Kumancan himself lodged a report on July 30 against Mohd Nasir and the school for allegedly taking photographs of his 10-year-old daughter in school.

He alleged it happened twice on July 29, four days after shower room incident.

Last Friday, a policeman went to Kumancan's mother-in-law's home around midnight and caused a "commotion", according to Gunasegaran.

The next day Gunasegaran advised the "terrified" Kumancan to lodge a report against the cop, and he was told then to return on Monday to give a statement.

When he arrived yesterday, he was arrested and put him in an identification line-up where he was picked out by two teachers from the school.

Gunasegaran, reading out a statement by the parents, said Kumancan's case was worrying. "So, we don't believe the school is the right place for our children to study."

Kumancan, who was present, confirmed that his daughter would be moved too.

"Which parent would not be alarmed when they hear strange people taking pictures of their children in school?" he said.

Another parent, who only wanted to be known as Raj, had successfully transferred his 10-year-old daughter to another school.

"I am just concerned about her education.

"She was bullied mercilessly and begged me not to send her to that school," he added.

Raj and Kumancan were one of the 10 parents who had lodged a report against Mohd Nasir last month.

Meanwhile, Subang Member of Parliament R. Sivarasa said that the matter had escalated from a principal's mistake to allegations of police abusing their powers.

"This matter cannot be solved in the district level. I will bring this to Bukit Aman," he promised.

He also called on the BN government, especially the Home Minister and the Education Minister, to act quickly to defuse the tension.

"A responsible government will immediately resolve this issue instead of letting it get out of hand." - August 27, 2013.

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