

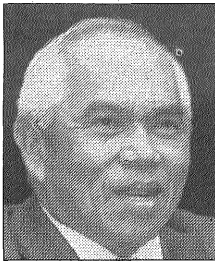
Census on enrolling paperless kids into public schools

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KOTA KINABALU:

The State Education and Innovation Ministry is still in the midst of conducting a census to streamline the process of enrolling undocumented children into public schools in the State.



Its Minister Datuk Dr Yusuf Yacob (pic) said they have a body to look into the matter and hope the census can be completed within a year.

"Sabah is a huge State and will take our officers a bit of time to complete the census, we are aware that this needs to be done quickly," he said, after officiating the Faculty of Humanities, Arts and Heritage's book launching ceremony at the Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) Recital Hall, Thursday.

The census is to find out the number of undocumented children and to ensure the process of enrolling them into public schools is in accordance to the stipulated guidelines.

The new policy came into effect on Jan. 1 and aims to simplify the registration of children without citizenship in government schools.

Last October, the Federal Education Ministry decided that children without citizenship need only produce their birth certificates, adoption papers or court order to register in public schools. If they do not have these documents, they can get verification from the community leaders or their people's representatives.

Deputy Education Minister Teo Nie Chin said children without citizenship but where one parent is a Malaysian citizen and has a birth certificate, will be allowed to register in government schools.

Parents or guardians of the children can make their application by filling up the Citizen Student Without Documents (MWTD) forms in the respective District

Education Offices. The forms must be verified by the village chiefs in the place where they reside.

They have up to two years to provide the necessary documents. Dr Yusuf said he personally thinks all human beings have the right to an education.

"Children shouldn't be left to wander around in shops and back-alleys during school days, they should be in school, regardless of whether they are local children or of immigrants.

"In Sabah we have an issue of these immigrants in the State, thus the reason we are still in the process of conducting a census on how we can solve this problem," he said.

They hope to expedite cases where one of the parents are locals, "We want to get this done quick to ensure their children can be enrolled into schools.

"We are also trying to solve cases involving those without any documents, thus the census which is also still in the process," he said. It was reported that in 2016, there were 300,000 children without citizenship in Malaysia, aged 18 years and younger.

On another note, he said there are currently an estimated of over 300 children whose parents are documented immigrants working in estates, who are now studying at Community Learning Centres in the estates.

"Once they complete their studies at the Community Learning Centres they return to their respective countries to pursue their studies at secondary school level," he said.

He said this is a policy established in that past that estates must provide schools for their worker's children; workers who are registered as foreign labourers or one of the parents is registered as a foreign labourer.

"These children will be taught at the estate's Community Learning Centres and will return to their country to pursue their education upon completion," he said.