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More support staff for schools (HL)

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KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. - Some 14,000 support staff will be recruited for schools nationwide to ease the administrative burden of teachers, Education Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak said today.

He said the ministry would seek the additional staff which covered categories of administrative assistant, laboratory assistant and junior general assistant.

"Employing the staff will reduce the administrative burden faced by teachers and enable the teachers to concentrate fully on teaching."

There are currently some 8,000 secondary and primary schools throughout the country.

Najib said this when speaking to reporters after delivering his New Year message to the ministry's senior officials.

Also present were Deputy Education Ministers Datuk Khalid Yunus and Datuk Dr Fong Chan Onn and the ministry's director-general, Tan Sri Wan Zahid Mohd Noordin.

He said employment of the new support staff would be carried out soon and the ministry was already discussing the matter with the relevant authorities.

"It will take some time as interviews will have to be conducted but we hope to do it by this year."

Najib said that at some schools, teachers currently had to carry out clerical work as their schools did not have the support staff or were facing a staff shortage.

He said the ministry had been given a RM40 million allocation over and above the RM60 million revolving fund for car loan facility to headmasters, assistant headmasters and senior assistants.

He said with the increase it was hoped that more headmasters and senior assistants would be able to enjoy the loan facility.

(An additional 1,000 headmasters and senior assistants are expected to benefit from the additional allocation).

However, he said the facility was limited to the administrative category and did not cover all teachers as the fund was limited.

"It is limited to certain categories involving those holding posts in the schools."

He said the approval had just been granted and the ministry was still finalising the details.

On the recommendations made by a task force on improving the teaching profession, he said the ministry had completed its study on the matter.

Najib said he would be discussing the ministry's views with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

He said the ministry was trying to identify the recommendations which should be given priority and were critical in improving the teaching profession.

On Sept 12, 1994, Najib said a task force headed by former director-general of Education Tan Sri Abdul Rahman Arshad had been formed to study teachers' grouses.

It was to look into ways to enhance professionalism by providing training opportunities, upgrading the qualifications of teachers and creating a conducive teaching environment.

He said the task force had also discussed the matter with the National Union of Teaching Profession and added that the union's views would be

taken into consideration when implementing any recommendations.

Earlier in his message, he said, last year the ministry had performed extremely well and called for greater efficiency.

He described this year as a year for implementation, consolidation and refining what had been decided the previous year.

"1995 was the year for generating ideas and last year for formulation of policy and programmes. This year is for implementation which is the most challenging of all the stages."

He said the country's education system should achieve world-class standard before the year 2020.

"Whether we like it or not we need to leap forward and cannot wait to move ahead only when we feel comfortable," he said.

Meanwhile, NUTP president Abu Bakar Shawket Ali welcomed the ministry's plan to employ support staff.

He said currently there was an acute shortage of support staff in schools where teachers had to type their own question papers and exercises.

"There are also instances where teachers have to paint lines on the football and hockey fields," he said.

Therefore, he said by employing the administrative assistants they would be able to handle all clerical duties and paperwork.

"This will reduce significantly the administrative work being done by some teachers currently," he said, adding that the junior general assistants would be able to handle gardening and other jobs.

He said the ministry should also consider employing support staff for the "Kemahiran Hidup" workshops.

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