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## NUTP accepts single-session school system

Chok Suat Ling

KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. - The National Union of the Teaching Profession, which had earlier expressed reservations over the single-session system in schools, today agreed to support its implementation in 28 schools in the country on June 9.

NUTP secretary-general N. Siva Subramanian said the union agreed to the pilot project where school hours in 28 secondary schools would be increased by 110 minutes.

Under the project, school hours in the selected schools will be from 8am to 3.30pm.

However, Siva said the union still stood firmly by its resolution that teachers should only work five days a week and not more than their present required working hours.

"If they are required to work overtime, they must be paid. Both the ministry and NUTP will be monitoring the progress and effectiveness of the project," he said after a meeting between NUTP representatives and Education Ministry director-general Tan Sri Wan Zahid Mohd Noordin at the ministry.

The idea for single-session schools was proposed at the first National Seminar on Education in Genting Highlands in July 1994.

Education Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak yesterday said the school syllabus to be covered was extensive but time was rather short, especially for subjects like science and mathematics.

He said there must be additional teaching hours if students were to excel in the disciplines.

Siva had said the NUTP was against the scheme as it would increase teachers' workload.

This prompted Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad to say on Jan 9 that many teachers were agreeable to the idea and only NUTP was objecting.

Siva described what had transpired before as just a "professional debate" which was "healthy for the development of the nation."

"If we just accept everything, we will not be able to deliver our best for students and teachers."

Siva said there were many dedicated teachers who did not neglect their duties towards their students.

"There are certain quarters, including those in the mass media, who do not want to acknowledge our contribution towards the development of the nation.

"They do not take into account our feelings and this saddens us," he said.

Wan Zahid said he was pleased the issue on single-session schools had been resolved amicably between the ministry and NUTP.

"We have had several discussions and have clarified to the union that the system will not be implemented in all schools as yet.

"The ministry also told the union that the pilot project's purpose is to gauge the effectiveness of the system, to see whether the system is viable."

He said the ministry would hold further discussions with NUTP after the project was implemented to discuss its effectiveness.

Two secondary schools in each State have been selected for the pilot project.

The schools are SM Sains Syed Putra and SM Syed Ahmad in Perlis; SM Sains Kluang and SM Pai Chee in Johor; SM Gedangsa and SM Projek in Selangor; SM Seri Dungun and SM Sultan Sulaiman in Terengganu; SM Sains Kuching and Kolej Datuk Patinggi Abang Haji Abdillah in Sarawak; SBP Lahad Datu Tawau and Maktab Sabah, Kota Kinabalu in Sabah; and SM Sains Muzaffar Shah and SM Lubok China in Malacca.

The others are SM Aminuddin Baki and SM Sri Pantai Kampung Kerinci in Kuala Lumpur; SM RLKT Rasah and SM Layang-Layang Kiri in Perak; SMKA Tengku Ampuan Hajah Afzan and SM Seri Jengka in Pahang; SMKA Naim Lilbarat and SM Dato Ahmad Maher in Kelantan; SMKA Kedah and SMT Alor Setar in Kedah, SMKA Pedas and SM Sri Sendayan in Negri Sembilan; and SM Abdullah Munshi and SM Penang Free in Penang.

Wan Zahid said they represented a cross-section of schools in the country.

"The ministry will monitor the progress and determine whether the facilities, teaching staff and food prepared for students are sufficient."

He said the single-session school system, with its longer hours, should solve the problem of teachers having to come in on weekends to finish their work.

On the schedule for single-session schools, Wan Zahid said the guidelines were contained in a working paper which still needed to be fine-tuned.

"Details will be released by the end of the month," he said.

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