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Minister: Pre-school may become mandatory for five-year-olds

PENANG, Sat. - Mandatory pre-school education may be introduced for all children on reaching the age of five, Education Minister Senator Tan Sri Dr Musa Mohamad said.

He said in making it compulsory, the ministry might ask private kindergartens to help out but they will have to follow a curriculum set by the ministry.

Musa also said the ministry was considering reducing the total primary and secondary school years from the present 13 years to only 12, as in the American system.

Speaking to reporters after attending a breaking of fast ceremony at Mesjid Kapitan Keling tonight, he said: "These are some of the issues that I am looking into seriously now."

Musa, however, said the proposals should not be seen as an overhaul of the country's education system.

"I am only thinking about it based on feedback I have received from many quarters, including parents, teachers and non-governmental organisations.

"I am still getting feedback on these issues and others which are important in boosting the nation's education system," he said.

Musa, a former Universiti Sains Malaysia vice-chancellor, was the only non-politician appointed a Minister when Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad announced his new Cabinet.

Tonight's function, organised by the Tanjung Umno division, was his first official appearance in Penang.

While expressing "satisfaction" with the present education system, Musa said: "More can be done to hasten the process of achieving a world class education system for the country.

"By getting feedback from the people and my staff, I am actually in the process of fine-tuning our education policies."

The Education Ministry, he said, was carrying out a review to see if the various policies had been carried out properly and if they were still viable.

"We may introduce new policies later but now, we are just going through existing ones," he said.

He said his ministry was also looking into the problems faced by teachers, although they have been fairly rewarded.

"We are looking at the whole education system from the bottom upwards with a view of making ours one of the best in the world.

"As such, we need co-operation from all especially teachers and parents, to give their input on how best to achieve this," he said.

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