

Errant lab contractors to have jobs terminated

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KUALA LUMPUR, Wed. The Education Ministry is discussing the method to terminate the services of contractors who fail to complete the construction of computer laboratories in schools.

Its minister, Tan Sri Musa Mohamad, said there were cases of contractors failing to complete the work even after being given three extensions.

"We have to take action against them. The method of termination is being discussed," he said at his office today.

Musa said new contractors will be appointed later

and will also be given three months to complete the work.

To expedite the process, he said, the new contractors will most likely use the ready-to-assemble method, Class F contractors and direct contracting.

On Dec 30, a Malay daily, *Mingguan Malaysia*, reported the failure of contractors to complete the construction of nearly 85% of projects, although the ministry had, in the cases of four main contractors, given three extensions of the completion period.

As at Dec 15, of the 1,840 school computer laborato-

ry projects in four zones in the peninsula, 195 laboratories had yet to be built, although the completion date was Dec 31.

Of the total, only 48 projects have been fully completed and 1,597 laboratories are still under construction.

On the same day, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the practice of bumiputra contractors selling their contracts is the cause of their failure to complete the projects.

Mahathir, who is also finance minister, said the government will, from this

year, review the process of issuing contracts.

The issue was first highlighted by Deputy Education Minister Datuk Abdul Aziz Shamsuddin on Nov 9.

Asked about claims that there was a lack of care in selecting contractors, Musa refused to comment, saying it is a sensitive matter which is not under his ministry's jurisdiction.

He also explained that the said four contractors are computer suppliers, and the Finance Ministry has instructed them to provide 10 computers to schools in the event of any delay.