

Schools ready to teach in English

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KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. — Almost all schools will be ready to teach Science and Mathematics in English next year with all national schools to be fully equipped with computers and projectors by next week, said Education Minister Tan Sri Musa Mohamad.

"Preparations started a few months ago. The recent reports I have received say that 95 per cent of national schools have been equipped with computers and projectors, while national-type schools will receive this equipment by the end of the month."

Musa added that materials to aid teachers in the teaching of Science and Mathematics in English were being developed and were expected to be ready in time when schools open on Jan 5.

"I am not worried about the preparations. Even if there are shortcomings, we will be able to rectify them in time," Musa told reporters when met at his open house today.

Musa also said the committee to review the national education system was focusing on the issue of secondary private religious schools (Sekolah Menengah Agama Rakyat) and methods to strengthen national

schools.

He said that even though there was a decision to place students from SARs into the national schools, no decision had been made on whether they would be abolished or not.

"The committee has only met once and no decision has been made yet on the issue," he said, adding that they would have to look at all aspects of it because it was a bigger issue than the committee expected.

"We are getting feedback from numerous sources such as from Jakim (Islamic Development Department), political parties and the public, before deciding on it."

He said the committee was concentrating on secondary religious schools and not primary religious schools as pupils from the latter also attended national schools.

Musa added that there would always be groups who wanted to politicise the issue of religious schools but stressed that what the committee was doing was to equip pupils with the ability to face future challenges.

On Nov 29, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad announced that the committee which would be chaired by him would look into reviewing the school system and into improving the national education system.

Dr Mahathir said the different

religious schools in the country such as the SARs, religious schools run by the State Government and private institutions did not augur well for the country.

Asked on the criticisms by the National Union of Teaching Professions (NUTP) of the ministry's proposal to give critical allowance to English, Science and Mathematics teachers, Musa said the allowance was an incentive to attract students with Science, Engineering, Mathematics and English qualifications to become teachers, as demand for such teachers was high.

"There is also no worry that there will be a rush of teachers who do not have the qualifications to become English teachers just to benefit from the special allowance. This is because those who are qualified to receive the allowance will be chosen by headmasters.

"There are two ways to go about this issue, either we have this special allowance or we don't pay it out to any teachers since the Government cannot afford to pay all teachers with the critical allowance."

On Dec 8, NUTP secretary-general Datuk N. Siva Subramaniam said the ministry should expand the special allowance to all 300,000 teachers and not just English, Science and Mathematics teachers.