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Special allocation for schools (HL)

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KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. - The Education Ministry will allocate between RM5,000 and RM15,000 to all schools for books and resource materials for the teaching of Science and Mathematics in English next year.

Education Minister Tan Sri Musa Mohamad conveyed this to representatives of 280 Parent-Teacher Associations from all over the country at a closed-door briefing here today.

The two-hour session was held at the Dynasty Hotel.

Also present were Deputy Education Minister Datuk Hon Choon Kim and Education Ministry director-general Datuk Abdul Rafie Mahat.

Musa did not speak to reporters after the meeting, but when met at a function in Sekolah Kebangsaan Kampung Medan in Kuala Langat in the afternoon, he confirmed the special allocations.

He said headmasters and principals could use the one-off allocation at their own discretion to buy additional teaching and learning materials.

Asked whether the school heads were required to report their purchases to the ministry, Musa said: "I believe they can be trusted to use the money wisely."

Earlier during the briefing, Musa elaborated at length on the rationale behind the move to implement the teaching of the two subjects in English, and preparations by the ministry. The representatives were told that textbooks, courseware and other teaching tools would be ready on time and that circulars on the special incentives for English, Science and Mathematics teachers would be distributed soon.

Musa also assured the PTAs that the move would not erode the identity of vernacular schools.

There are about 6,000 national primary schools, 1,700 national secondary schools, 1,300 Chinese schools and 530 Tamil schools in the country.

The special allocations come in tandem with other arrangements put in place by the Government to facilitate the implementation.

They include the training of teachers; providing schools with notebook computers, LCD projectors and other equipment; the preparation of textbooks; and briefing sessions by State and district education departments to teachers and parents.

Science and Mathematics will be taught in English in Standard One, Form One and Lower Six in national and Tamil schools from next year. For Chinese schools, a "professional formula" based on the Barisan Nasional's decision to teach the two subjects in both English and Mandarin will be worked out this week.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, in his speech on Budget 2003, had announced nearly RM5 billion in allocations from this year until 2008 for the implementation of the policy.

Meanwhile, National Parent-Teacher Association Collaboration Council president Associate Prof Mohamad Ali Hassan, who was at the briefing session, told reporters that all the PTAs - including those of Chinese and Tamil schools - expressed full support for the move to teach Science and Mathematics in English.

Mohamad Ali said the move would enable students to acquire knowledge more effectively.

He said the briefing was important to help the PTAs understand the rationale behind the move.

"We must not be emotional over it. Parents must not be influenced by

quarters opposed to the move.

"We must see the real situation and not be swayed by those who may not fully comprehend the reasons behind the move. On our part, we will also hold briefing sessions."

The PTAs were also briefed by Rafie and directors of the ministry's School Division, Teacher Education Division and Curriculum Development Centre.