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Ready for English switch (HL)

P. Sharmini

KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. - It's all systems go as schools and teachers are geared to teach Science and Mathematics in English in the new school year.

National Conference of Secondary School Principals president Alimuddin Mohd Dom said to prepare themselves, teachers in secondary schools had been trained by the Education Ministry since September.

"Teachers had some 100 hours of training in September and October," he said.

He added the two-phase training courses emphasised language skills as well as the syllabus.

"For language skills, the emphasis is on language fluency, grammar and teaching methods, while the second phase concentrates on terms and language specific to the subjects," he said on RTM1's Selamat Pagi Malaysia today.

He added that the teachers were also trained in "macro teaching" where experienced teachers advised them on how to conduct and handle classes.

Alimuddin, who is the principal of Malay College Kuala Kangsar, hoped the new policy would take off smoothly.

He urged his counterparts to monitor closely the implementation of the new policy, especially in the first six months.

"Principals should observe the classes and have discussions with teachers and students," he said.

Alimuddin said all principals in secondary schools had begun preparations for the new policy after it was mooted by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad in July this year.

"Principals are sensitive to new policies and have to ensure that all guidelines set by the Education Ministry are followed."

He said principals began by identifying and selecting the teachers who would be involved in teaching the subjects in English.

For example, in his school, Alimuddin said three teachers each had been selected to teach Science and Mathematics for Form One.

Alimuddin is the eighth senior official to go on air to explain the Government's preparations for the teaching of Science and Mathematics in English in Standard One, Form One and Lower Six next year.

Parents, too, have a role to play when the policy is implemented, by ensuring that there is sufficient reading material in English at home.

"They can also help by occasionally conversing with their children in English," he said.

Alimuddin said parents who were conversant in the language and had skills to share were welcome to discuss with the school authorities how they could contribute to the cause.

He said the push for the increased use of the English language was necessary as the country moved closer to becoming a developed nation.

"Subjects such as Science and Mathematics must be mastered, while English is the language of knowledge as most books in both local and foreign universities are in English," he said.

"If we do not master English, we will be left behind," he added.

He urged the public not to underestimate teachers as they were mostly graduates and were well exposed to English.

"The last time when teachers had to change from English medium to the Bahasa Melayu medium, they did not have the latest technology and facilities to assist them, but they still managed to do so."

Now teachers have at their fingertips ICT facilities such as computers, CD-ROMs and even teaching scripts. He said the Education Ministry had planned the policy well, ensuring that by the year 2008 all students would learn both subjects in English.

Education Minister Tan Sri Musa Mohamad and three other senior ministry officials are slated to appear on the programme soon to talk about preparations for the teaching of the two subjects in English.