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Teachers must be realistic over annual leave plan: Aziz

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THE Government wants teachers to be realistic when exercising their new proposed privilege of having annual leave.

Deputy Education Minister Datuk Abdul Aziz Shamsuddin said some 270,000 teachers nationwide are set to benefit from the proposal that had been submitted to the Public Services Department (PSD) for approval.

"At the moment the break that teachers enjoy during school holidays are really meant for the student.

"Sometimes teachers are required to invigilate examinations or attend courses during these holidays. However some can opt not to attend to these responsibilities if they choose not to.

"Therefore the Government feels that the annual leave proposal would benefit them," he told reporters after attending the 2002 National Education Premier Convention in Shah Alam, Selangor, yesterday.

The closed-door convention was also attended by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Currently, teachers only work 200 days a year, weekends excluded.

Abdul Aziz said at present, headmasters and principals qualify for annual leave as they are involved in administrative matters but the union had asked this to be extended to senior assistants too.

"If approved, the annual leave for teachers will follow as per the PSD guidelines on annual leave for government servants. We leave it to them as they have vast experience in this matter," he said.

Asked on the negative response from the teachers' union, Abdul Aziz said the ministry is prepared to hold talks to clear the air on the matter.

Commenting on the convention, he added that the Prime Minister had urged teachers to strive for excellence in their profession and avoid picking on the mistakes of others.

"Dr Mahathir said looking only at the mistakes of others and not oneself is one of the contributing factors for our present weakness.

"Teachers, the Prime Minister said, must take their responsibilities seriously as they are tasked to develop responsible citizens of this country," Abdul Aziz elaborated.

The Prime Minister also advised teachers to understand their mission in their profession, he said.

On the involvement of teachers in partisan politics, Abdul Aziz said Dr Mahathir stressed that those teachers who have diverted their attention to political activities have forgotten the blessings and facilities that they have enjoyed from the Government.

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