

Perlis gets go-ahead for extra classes

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But participation of teachers and students voluntary

KANGAR: Perlis has been allowed to go ahead with implementing extended school hours - but they cannot be forced on students and teachers.

Mentri Besar Datuk Seri Shahidan Kassim said this yesterday on his return here after a meeting with Education Minister Tan Sri Musa Mohamad in Kuala Lumpur.

The extended school hours, termed "tuition" by the Perlis government, involves having students staying back until about 4.30pm to learn Arabic, mathematics and science.

Shahidan told Bernama the programme would be implemented only at suitable times.

"We will not force them (teachers

and students) but it will be implemented on a voluntary basis," he said.

The tuition programme would not be implemented during school hours but during spare time as required by the ministry.

Shahidan said he met Musa to clear a misunderstanding and to resolve the issue.

He said he had telephoned Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and informed him about the outcome of the meeting.

Asked about Abdullah's reaction, he said the deputy prime minister was happy that the issue had been amicably settled.

On the misunderstanding over the

tuition programme, Shahidan said certain news reports had described the programme as a single-session school and this had led to confusion.

"It is not our aim to introduce a single-session school but only tuition classes on a voluntary basis. We have also done this in the past," he said.

It was reported yesterday that Abdullah and Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had ticked off Shahidan for trying to implement the extra classes.

They said education was a matter for the federal government to decide.

Shahidan said he and Musa now have a similar perception on the tuition programme.