

12 FEB 2003

Mahathir-Perlis

NO DECISION YET ON PERLIS-PROPOSED LONGER SCHOOL HOURS, SAYS DR M

JITRA, Feb 12 (Bernama) -- The Federal Government has not made a decision on plans by the Perlis state government to extend the school hours at all schools in the state from March 1, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

The Prime Minister said the Federal Government needs to know the details of the proposed plan.

"We have a national school system and the system comes under the jurisdiction of the Federal Government. Nevertheless, we cannot prevent anyone from having extra classes to teach students other subjects, including Arabic," he told reporters at his Hari Raya Aidiladha open house.

Asked whether does it mean that Perlis could go ahead with its plan to extend the school hours, Dr Mahathir said he did not know the details of the plan.

The Perlis Government proposed to continue with the national education syllabus in the morning session while Arabic, Moral Education, Fardhu Ain (religious obligation for Muslims) and English would be taught in tuition classes in the evening.

Asked to comment on the statement by Perlis Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Shahidan Kassim that the plan was not his idea but that of Dr Mahathir to teach Sekolah Agama Rakyat (SAR) subjects in the afternoon at government schools, Dr Mahathir said:

"We have not made a decision yet because it is still at discussion stage. We are studying whether the religious school system introduced in Johor can be extended nationwide."

Johor has a religious school system with its own school buildings and administration.

Students from national schools attending the morning session will go to the religious school in the afternoon and vice-versa.

Dr Mahathir also reiterated that the country needed its people to be trained and skilled in diverse disciplines.

Furthermore, it was compulsory for Muslims to be skilful in various fields to apply the skills to progress in life and defend the country, he said.

Thousands of well-wishers attended the open house of Dr Mahathir, who is also the Member of Parliament for Kubang Pasu.

Three Thai provincial Governors Vichit Vichaisarn (Satun), Amnuay Ronggern (Songkhla) and Panuk Utairan (Yala) were also present.

-- BERNAMA

JM TS