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Government to woo all races to become teachers in national schools

KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. - The Government will aggressively woo people of all races to become teachers in primary and secondary schools to attract more Chinese and Indian students.

It will also look into better wages for teachers to make the national education system more attractive.

Deputy Education Minister Datuk Abdul Aziz Shamsuddin said the committee established to review the national school system agreed that these were important factors to be considered in restructuring the system.

The committee, chaired by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, was set up to restructure the national education system and ensure it remained relevant and provided quality education.

The committee has held three meetings so far.

"However, we will also be looking at other aspects, not just money. We will also be directing the selection board at teachers' training colleges to ensure a balanced mix of races.

"Currently, Chinese and Indian parents tend not to want to send their children to national schools as they say they hardly see any Chinese or Indian teachers there. This is sad. In those days, children of different races studied and played together," he said after receiving a courtesy call from Maldives Deputy Education Minister Mahamood Shougee at the ministry today.

Abdul Aziz said as the country had parallel educational systems, it was sometimes difficult for students of different races to integrate.

He said, however, that the Government would not abolish the vernacular school system.

"We will strictly adhere to the Constitution."

Among measures that have been taken to ensure the national school system remained relevant and to attract more students to government schools, he said, were the teaching of Science and Mathematics in English and enhancing the teaching of Jawi.

"We are also planning to introduce Mandarin, Tamil and Arabic as subjects in all schools."

He said the proposals made by the committee would not be carried out simultaneously but in phases.

On the plan by the Perlis Government to extend schooling hours, he said it was feasible even though not all schools were single session yet.

He said the Government planned for all schools to be single session by 2005.