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NUTP: Seek solution to extended school hours

IPOH, Thurs. - The National Union of the Teaching Profession (NUTP) has urged all quarters to stop debating the extended school hours proposed by the Perlis State Government and seek an amicable solution instead.

Secretary-general Datuk N. Siva Subramaniam said the issue should not be blown out of proportion, and those involved should adopt a positive approach to solving the problem.

He said the union was against extended school hours but would support the introduction of tuition classes after normal periods, especially for the benefit of students too poor to afford private tuition classes.

Siva Subramaniam was commenting on the statement by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad yesterday that the Federal Government had not decided on the extension of school hours in Perlis.

He had also said the Federal Government could not stop any party from giving extra classes, but needed to determine the curriculum, especially for subjects such as Religious Studies. Dr Mahathir also said he had not received any details of the proposed extension.

Two days ago, Perlis Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Shahidan Kassim had said that Perlis would go ahead with its plan to extend school hours, which would be called "tuition classes", from 7.45am to 4.30pm effective March 1.

He said the schools would follow the national syllabus in the morning and teach subjects such as Arabic, Morals, Fardhu Ain and English in the afternoon.

Non-Malay students will be able to learn English, moral education and their mother tongue.

Shahidan had said the move was in line with the Students' Performance Enhancement Programme proposed in 1996, which was withdrawn due to financial constraints.

Education Minister Tan Sri Musa Mohamad and Education director-general Datuk Abdul Rafie Mahat had cautioned Perlis over the extended hours.

Teachers' unions were not in favour of the move.