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Spot checks on schools to ensure smooth English switch

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KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. - Senior Education Ministry officials are making spot checks on schools nationwide to ensure the teaching of science and mathematics in English is on track.

Education director-general Datuk Abdul Rafie Mahat said reports from State education department heads had been positive so far.

"I have also checked several schools. Last weekend, I dropped by four schools and I saw teachers were handling computers well and students were enthusiastic. In time, I believe teachers will be even more confident with their laptops and LCD projectors.

"Officers from the School Inspectorate are also making checks and giving help to teachers. State education department directors will submit their reports to us weekly at the ministry; all is proceeding well," he said after launching a mathematics and science reference book festival at the Mid Valley Megamall Exhibition Centre today.

The three-day bookfest, organised by the Malaysian Book Industry, is open from 10am to 9pm. Admission is free.

Science and Mathematics is taught in English in Standard One, Form One and Lower Six this year.

On support-teaching materials for the teaching of Science and Mathematics in English, he said teachers who came up with their own materials would have their efforts recognised and rewarded by the ministry.

He said the ministry had several incentive schemes for creative teachers and would give those who made the effort awards and even promotions.

"We urge teachers to come up with multimedia teaching materials and CD-ROMs to complement those supplied by the ministry. Teaching tools should not just be confined to text-books.

"Creative teachers will be bestowed guru inovasi, or creative teachers' awards. We may also promote them to become guru cemerlang (Master Teachers)." On the claim of shortage of certain textbook titles at the start of the school year, he denied there were shortages.

"We make efforts to overcome all problems. We also have the centralised sale of textbooks every year where parents should be able to get all the titles."

Asked to comment on Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's statement yesterday that schooling hours might be extended to accommodate Islamic studies in all national schools, he said no decision had been made yet but the ministry was looking at various models that could be implemented.

"We also make ongoing efforts to revise the syllabus of all subjects, including Islamic studies, to ensure they remain relevant."

Dr Mahathir had described the teaching of Islam in national schools as shallow and lacking substance and that the new curriculum on religious studies would be more comprehensive to help students to be better Muslims.

On the four schoolchildren in Kampung Merbok Indah in Jalan Kuala Selangor, Sungai Buloh, who were seriously injured by explosions from home-made bombs last week, he said the ministry was looking at how it could help them.

On anti-government lecturers, he said their job was to disseminate good values. "If they are against the Government and are stubborn, and choose to go against the tide, they have to be prepared to get wet."

He praised the BookFest and urged parents, students, teachers and school librarians to visit it.