

## **Only 2.03pct of vernacular primary schools agree to Jawi lessons**

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EDITOR'S NOTE: This article has been amended to correct an initial error in calculations.

Only a fraction of vernacular primary schools had agreed to proceed with the teaching of Jawi as part of the Bahasa Malaysia syllabus.

According to a parliamentary written reply by the Education Ministry, only 2.77 percent of the 1,299 SRJK(C) and 0.2 percent of the 525 SRJK(T) schools had agreed to do so as of June this year.

This amounts to 2.03% (37 out of 1824 schools).

This was in reply to a question by Tanjong Karang MP Noh Omar.

In mid-2019, it was discovered that the Pakatan Harapan administration had

agreed to proceed with the previous administration's plan to introduce "seni khat" or Malay calligraphy into the Primary 4 Bahasa Malaysia syllabus.

The decision met with heavy protest from non-Malays, many of which believed that the move was related to Islamisation and would burden their children.

MCA president and former deputy education minister Wee Ka Siong, for instance, said that the learning of the Jawi script would not help improve fluency in Bahasa Malaysia.

Then education minister Maszlee Malik initially refused to budge, stressing that khat was part of Malay heritage and that the lessons involved only six pages on the textbook.

Eventually, the Harapan administration buckled to pressure and switched from an introduction to khat to an introduction to Jawi, involving only three pages.

Vernacular schools had the choice of opting-in to teach those three pages through a vote from parents.

The only schools that can proceed with the teaching of those three pages are those where at least 51 percent of parents had voted in favour.

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