'Not mandatory for schools to use Jawi script'

MISUNDERSTANDING:
Malacca schools were encouraged, not ordered, to use Jawi, says minister

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THE Education Ministry has clarified that it is not compulsory for vernacular schools in Malacca to include Jawi inscriptions in their signboards.

Second Deputy Education Minister P. Kamalanathan told the New Straits Times yesterday that the move was not mandatory, contrary to a notice issued to the vernacular schools.

He said the Malacca Education Department was only forwarding the implementation of a plan that was being done by the state government.

The notice, dated Nov 2, said the state government and Institut Seni Malaysia Melaka (ISMM) launched the implementation of the use of Jawi in all federal and state agencies, including institutions of learning.

The decision was made to uplift and strengthen the use of Bahasa Malaysia as the national language, in both its Romanised and Arabic script form.

It was also mentioned in the notice that schools were encouraged to implement and use Jawi inscriptions in the state, although it was not mandatory for them to do so.

When asked if vernacular schools should worry about the notice, Kamalanathan said: “As mentioned in the explanation, it is not compulsory.”

ISMM general manager Dr Mohd Nasaruddin Abd Rahman said all national-type schools in the state were also not forced to implement the usage of Jawi in their premises.

“We are only encouraging schools to use the Jawi script. This matter should not (have been) made an issue. The matter had been explained clearly during previous briefings.”

He said no punishment would be imposed on schools that declined to add Jawi inscriptions on their signboards.

However, he said, national-type schools that opted to promote the usage of Jawi stood a chance to win prizes based on an assessment on all schools statewide, beginning Feb 1.

Malacca Chinese Education Progressive Association chairman Yang Yin Chong said the association’s apprehension about the directive was because of practical reasons, as Chinese schools do not have teachers who could teach Jawi script. Additional reporting by Kelly Koh

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