

Least of Mahathir's worries

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EDUCATION MINISTER, Dr. Mahathir has quite a lot on his hands. The examination paper leak has come at a time of student unrest in institutions of higher learning, the textbook loan scheme that is soon to be launched and above all the review of the education system that is now under way.

The question paper problem should be the least of his worries. It has happened before. Of course a full inquiry is necessary but it is up to the police, with the co-operation of the Education Ministry, to find the culprit or culprits. The security system for the question papers needs scrutiny.

They were printed in London and were kept at the Kuala Lumpur airport when they arrived. Distribution came a few days later. The leak could have occurred anywhere along the line. The packages were sealed and tampering with them should be easily detected. If not, a better way of sealing is needed. It is carelessness that allows the present security arrangements to be breached.

How serious is the leak? It is serious enough for Dr. Mahathir to order a new Bahasa paper for the pupils. It means delay and more expense but the examination would have been a sham otherwise. Raising the passing mark as a counter measure would have penalised the pupils who are honest. Those who have studied well and have a sound grasp of the language need not worry about having to sit for the papers again.