

SCHOOLS REVIEW

STAR 17 APR 2007

Mahathir: Education system has failed to unite the people

By SA'ODAH ELIAS

KUALA LUMPUR: The Government has admitted that the education system contains weaknesses and will review it to overcome problems, especially in national schools.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said there was a need to correct the perception that the current system promoted racial segregation instead of integration.

The Prime Minister said there were many weaknesses in the current system arising from the wrong perception that its objective was to segregate students according to their ethnic background.

"There are many problems and weaknesses that must be addressed. Many people still do not understand the objectives of our education system.

"Due to that, many things happened which contributed to the system having failed to fully achieve its objectives," he told reporters after chairing the Umno supreme council meet-

ing yesterday.

Dr Mahathir, who is Umno president, said the council was earlier briefed about these problems by Education Minister Tan Sri Musa Mohamad who presented a report on the matter.

"The report will be studied by the Government," he said.

Dr Mahathir said that among the weaknesses in national schools was the overemphasis on matters relating to religion which had deterred many non-Malay students from enrolling in them.

This, he said, had defeated the whole purpose of setting up national schools which was to encourage students of various races to learn together to enhance racial unity and integration.

"The system in these schools has also been found to be ineffective due to several problems relating to approaches towards the process of learning," he said.

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He said that while the students in Chinese schools excelled in their studies, it was less so for students from national schools.

Among the causes identified to have contributed to this problem, he said, was the approach in national schools which placed less emphasis on education and disciplinary matters.

On another matter, he said many Malaysians had expressed support for the recent arrest of seven people under the Internal Security Act.

"The majority of the people do not want what had happened in neighbouring coun-

tries to happen here. They are happy that the police had nipped the problem in the bud," he said in reply to a question.

Asked if there would come a time when the ISA would be repealed, Dr Mahathir said it would not be anytime soon because it had served its purpose very well.

"The majority of the people understand that democracy is not about using violence to overthrow the Government. However, there are some who, after having failed to do so through the ballot box, had planned to use violence.

"That may be how they view democracy, but that is not our way," he added.