

PM: Help Malay students to excel

STAR

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KUALA LUMPUR: Many Malay students who failed to enter secondary schools enrol, instead, in private religious schools which claim to be more Islamic than government-run schools, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said.

The Prime Minister said most of these schools were quite rundown, lacked facilities and trained teachers as well as charge fees, yet could attract many students.

"What is it that caused parents to uproot their children from national schools which have better facilities and with teachers who are well-trained and send them to private religious schools when the syllabus of education are the same?" he asked when opening the Malay Education Congress at the Putra World Trade Centre yesterday.

The development, he said, could be

due to a misconception among many parents that national schools did not give enough emphasis to the teaching of the religion.

There is also influence from certain groups that learning about other subjects deemed secular were not necessary.

Dr Mahathir said such groups were not happy to see Malay students paying attention to subjects other than religion because it would diminish their influence.

"To these people, it is all right if the Malays remain backward or be totally destroyed so long as their interest is served. That is why the number of Malay students qualified to go to the universities is small.

"But this does not worry them because they know that as bumiputras, their place in universities is assured," he added.

He called on parents, teachers, lecturers and educationists to work together with the Government to encourage Malay students to excel in subjects like science, technology, mathematics, and engineering so that the performance of the Malays could be on par with other races.

"Don't any of you try to discourage them from their pursuit for higher education and knowledge by saying that they are secular and will not help them in the afterlife.

"Remember, a sick man will have to seek treatment from the doctor, irrespective of whether he is an ulama or not," he said.

Speaking to reporters later, Dr Mahathir said because of the new phenomenon, stricter rules would be introduced soon to regulate the setting up of private religious schools to curb the misuse of Islam.