

# No need for a tribunal, says Mahathir

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KUALA LUMPUR: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad yesterday ruled out the setting up of a tribunal to investigate the veracity of race segregation in schools.

He said it was sufficient to look into the matter from the administrative angle or through investigation by the Education Ministry.

"I don't think it is the right thing to do to set up a tribunal," he said after opening the Darby Park service apartment at Jalan Binjai here last night.

Also present at the function were Education Minister Tan Sri Musa Mohamad and

Permodalan Nasional Bhd chairman Tan Sri Ahmad Sarji Abdul Hamid.

Dr Mahathir said it was not Government's policy to segregate the races.

He said the Government had tried its best to bring students of various races together particularly during their formative years.

"(When) parents do not want to send their children to national schools, we tried to bring the different schools together to the same campus (under the Vision School concept).

"But there was such strong objection, suspecting that the Government is trying to do

away with schools for different races and all that," he said.

Dr Mahathir said he believed segregation occurred when some officials confused it with convenience.

He said he was not sure if the officers had purposely manipulated Government policies.

"We will look into that.

"They might interpret Government policies slightly different from what we intended.

"So if there is any wrong interpretation, we should take action to correct it," he said.

He said the matter should not be turned into a national issue that would "antagonise

one race against another."

National Unity and Social Development Ministry parliamentary secretary Datuk S. Veerasingham said streaming students for the sake of facilitating timetable requirements for Islamic studies and moral studies should not be used as an excuse by school authorities to segregate students along ethnic lines.

"Preparing a timetable for a class to reflect the needs of the different races should not be too difficult," he told reporters after presenting bicycles to 155 UPSR high achievers from various Tamil primary schools in the country here yesterday.