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Dr M meets national unity panel

PUTRAJAYA, Thurs. - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today met 43 members of the National Unity Advisory Panel at the Prime Minister's Department here.

The panel was led by National Unity and Social Development Minister Datuk Dr Siti Zaharah Sulaiman.

Briefing reporters after the one-and-a-half hour meeting, Siti Zaharah said Dr Mahathir called for misperceptions of issues among society to be corrected in a bid to reduce tensions and enhance unity.

Siti Zaharah said Dr Mahathir noted there was more religious intolerance due to less religious understanding to the point that sometimes students did not want to share classrooms.

"He said there was a need for religious understanding to be enhanced, to be corrected. This is important so that that matters should not be made controversial to the point that they became issues that could hurt sentiments, sow disagreement and disrupt unity," she said.

Siti Zaharah said Dr Mahathir said if necessary there should be continuous dialogues with students in institutions of higher learning.

She said to disseminate the message and importance of unity her ministry would have dialogues with important sectors like the media and students.

"We have had dialogues with students of Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak and Universiti Teknologi Mara," Siti Zaharah said.

She said her ministry would undertake an in-depth study to gauge the level of unity in the country.

The results of the study, Siti Zaharah said, would be used as a guide to formulate social development programmes.

She said unity clubs would be set up in secondary schools with a pilot project to be started in Sekolah Menengah Convent Bukit Nanas next month.

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