

PM: No racial segregation

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'NUTP misunderstood the situation'

SUBANG, Sun: The National Union of the Teaching Profession (NUTP) had misunderstood the situation when it alleged that there was racial segregation in 210 schools, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said.

"It's a misunderstanding because we have moral and religious studies. During these periods, we have to separate pupils," he said when asked to comment on an independent committee's findings that the NUTP's allegations were baseless.

"I think they (NUTP) misunderstood. I think we can clear this up with them."

In its report, the committee said there was nothing to show there was a hidden agenda in streaming students and that students were not deliberately segregated by race.

Mahathir said it was not a government policy to segregate pupils by race, reports Bernama.

"Actually, we want students to be together. It is other people who object as they do not want students (of different races) to study together," he said.

Groups representing headmasters and teachers have demanded that NUTP secretary-general Datuk N. Siva Subramaniam apologise for making the claims.

Contacted today, Siva said he agrees with Mahathir that it was all a misun-

derstanding.

"It's a very small problem. From the beginning, the entire issue was blown out of proportion as we were only helping. When we handed over the list to the ministry it was stated very clearly the list was not checked (*senarai tanpa semakan*)."

He said the matter can be solved through discussions and he is willing to resolve it as soon as possible, based on what the prime minister said.

Siva reiterated his statement yesterday the decision to reveal the details was done collectively by the union's executive council.

"Why is everybody attacking me when it was a collective decision?"

"No point of me making an apology just by mouth when I have not seen the panel's report," he said.

He said the union has asked the Education Ministry for five copies of the report.