

# PM: Govt doesn't segregate

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SUBANG: The Government does not believe in segregating students but wants them to learn and play together to enhance racial integration, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said.

"We always want all our students (of all races) to study together. It is others who object because they do not want students to be together. So, it is not right for anyone to say that we are segregating students (in national schools)," he said.

Dr Mahathir, who arrived at Koyal Malaysian Air Force Airport after a nine-day visit to Russia, Germany and Poland yesterday morning, was commenting on the report of a committee, headed by Emeritus Prof K.J. Ratnam, which found the National Union of Teaching Profession's claim that 210 national schools had racially segregated their students to be unfounded.

The whole issue, he said was the result of a misunderstanding on the part of NUTP, he said, adding that he was confi-

dent the issue could be resolved amicably between all the parties involved.

"I also received the report from NUTP. At a glance, there seemed to be a reason for the allegation, but that is not true. NUTP had misunderstood the situation because we have Islamic study (for Muslims)

and moral study (for non-Muslims) classes, and during these periods, students (in some schools) had to be segregated.

"I don't think there is a policy on segregating students," he added.

When asked if NUTP's allegation was a direct attack on

national schools, Dr Mahathir said he did not think it was so as it was "just a result of confusion".

Deputy Education Minister Datuk Aziz Shamsuddin, who was among the dignitaries who welcomed Dr Mahathir home, said NUTP must stop making such allegations.

"If it continues to make such allegations, I will have to brand them as agents out to cause disunity in our multi-racial society. I hope they will now sit calmly and reflect on the issue," he said.

The ministry, he said, had spent much money, time and effort to disprove NUTP's claim and it should reciprocate by accepting the findings and apologising for its mistake.

He explained that the misunderstanding arose because, in some schools, not all non-Muslim students were segregated during Islamic study classes because some of them attended the classes as they took the subject as an examination subject.

In fact, he said, in some cases, non-Muslim students scored better in comparison to their Muslim friends.

In other schools, where no non-Muslim students were interested in the subject, they were totally segregated, he said.

The ministry was willing to discuss the matter with NUTP, he said, and urged the union not to be arrogant.