

'No guarantees on vernacular schools'

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KUALA LUMPUR: The government does not discount the possibility that vernacular schools will be affected by the current review on the education system.

Education Minister Tan Sri Musa Mohamad said yesterday that so far, the status of vernacular schools has not been brought up by the special committee handling the review.

"At the moment, the focus of the committee is on *sekolah agama rakyat* (SAR) (people's religious schools), towards strengthening the

national schools. That's the intention," he said.

"There was no mention of the vernacular schools during the previous discussions but it is not impossible that the issue will be raised later.

"Therefore, I cannot guarantee that it will not be touched at all."

He was asked whether it can be concluded that the status of Chinese and Tamil schools will not be affected by the study on the revamp of the national education system.

Speaking to reporters at his Hari Raya open house, Musa said the matter is up to the committee chaired by Prime Minister Datuk Seri

Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

The committee first met on Dec 12.

Mahathir announced the study after an Umno supreme council meeting on Nov 29, saying there was no need for SAR in the country.

On Dec 3, the 88th meeting of the mentris besar and chief ministers decided that about 126,000 SAR students will be absorbed into national schools soon so that they will have access to quality education.

Religious adviser to the Prime Minister Tan Sri Abdul Hamid Othman had said the affected students can choose to either go to ordinary national schools or

state-owned religious national schools.

Musa said the focus of the study is on secondary SAR as they are outside the national school system, whereas the primary SAR also uses the national system.

On certain parties politicising the matter, he said it is up to the individual's intention but if it is seen positively, there is nothing for the people to worry about.

"We want to strengthen the capabilities of our children so that they are more prepared to face the future," he said, adding that the government will continue to explain the reason and aim of the study.