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Students to be the focus

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SHAH ALAM, Tues. - The Government's review of the education system will not see a change in the types of schools in Malaysia, but will concentrate on greater interaction and understanding between students, Deputy Education Minister Datuk Abdul Aziz Shamsudin said today.

He said members of the committee for the review would be determined by January and that the whole process would probably take six to eight months to complete.

The committee would also comprise educationists, religious organisations and teachers from all races and religions.

"For example, setting up Vision Schools was a physical aspect of what the Government was trying to do. That was the first tangible step. Now we have to get through the spiritual and emotional aspect of the people because that is what brings people together," he said after witnessing the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the National Translation Institute (ITNMB), Universiti Teknologi Mara (UiTM) and Utusan Publication & Distributor Sdn Bhd to translate and publish books on Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and his work.

He said the review would also include an emphasis on co-curriculum, to ensure students led a "balanced life" and practise tolerance for other races and religions.

"There are two streams now, the national schools stream and the national-type streams. If we are not careful we are going to run a nation with parallel attitudes, which do not meet anywhere," he said.

He said currently in national schools, there were teachers who did not concentrate on teaching but focused on religion and politics.

"They are coloured by politics, and this is detrimental (to education)... Knowingly or unknowingly, this is being done in most schools," he said.

There were also religious teachers who were more dominant than the headmasters, as they used religion to sway views and change rules in the schools.

"For example there was a time, in the 70s or 80s, when Maktab Rendah Sains Mara was one of the most interesting places to learn.

"But during the 90s, MRSM became very dull because they could not play things like music and sports. These are things that we should review because we do not want our students just to be learned but are also able to face all types of situations," he said.

He said it was the duty of the Government to conduct this review now and not wait until things became worse in the school system.

In today's event, ITNBMB, UiTM and Utusan Publication & Distributor Sdn Bhd signed a memorandum to translate and publish 14 books on Dr Mahathir, five of which are the Prime Minister's own works.

Among the book titles are Vision and Leadership: Values and Strategies Towards Vision 2020, Economic Development in Islam, Politics, Democracy and the New Asia and Managing the Malaysian Economy.

The books will be launched in February next year by Yang di-Pertuan Agong Tuanku Syed Sirajuddin Ibni Al-Marhum Tuanku Syed Putra Jamalullail and after that there will also be a colloquium on the thoughts of Dr Mahathir, attended by academicians and non-governmental organisations.