

30/11/2002

School system to be reviewed (HL)

Firdaus Abdullah; Sajahan Waheed

KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. - The Government will review the school system to improve the quality of education and to ensure it is in accordance with the National Education Policy, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

"I will be chairing the committee myself. We will study the entire system because we have deviated from the original system. Our aim is to ensure that our children attend the national schools so that they can pursue their studies in accordance with the policy.

"There will also be greater interaction among the various races," the Prime Minister and Umno president said after chairing an Umno supreme council meeting at Menara Dato' Onn.

Dr Mahathir said the different religious school systems run by State Governments, the People's Religious Schools and private organisations did not augur well for the social and educational development of children.

"It will take some time before we finalise this study but we will ensure that the national schools will be institutions which operate in line with the policy and are not tampered with by irresponsible quarters," he said.

He added that the Government did not see why the People's Religious Schools should continue to exist.

"We are an independent country and the Government funds practically all primary-level education. We have our national schools complete with religious studies and if students are interested to pursue their knowledge in religion, we also have the necessary facilities.

"So we feel that the People's Religious Schools are unnecessary," Dr Mahathir said, adding that such schools had insufficient funds to operate and often depended on the Government, lacked trained teachers and had deviated from the true teachings of Islam.

"The Government will not fund them in any way," he said.

"Students in such schools now will be accorded places in our national schools."

Dr Mahathir, however, said it was not necessary to ban these schools as they had no funds to continue operating.

"We have been assisting them ... they do not have sufficient funds," he said.

Last week, while on a working visit to France, Dr Mahathir told the Malaysian community in Paris that the national schools had failed to bring about better relations among the races.