

PM: No more aid to 'religious schools'

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'They are spreading political ideology through hatred'

KUALA LUMPUR: The government has stopped providing financial assistance to privately-run community-based religious schools because they were spreading their political ideology by instilling hatred.

They were not imparting Islamic knowledge, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said yesterday.

"They may continue operating the schools. What they need to do is register them as required by the law of our country, in accordance with the Education Act," he said.

"We don't consider them as religious schools, that is why we stop providing the assistance."

However, Chinese and Tamil schools will continue getting financial assistance.

Mahathir said Umno members should not listen to calls for such assistance to be scrapped.

He said the support of the Indian and Chinese communities is needed for the well-being of Umno.

He lamented that there are still many Umno leaders who are confused over the religious schools.

"We do not want to close them. We are merely scrapping financial assistance.

"Some are equating the stopping of financial assistance to the closure of such schools."

He defended the government's move to stop the financial aid.

"We do not want to close them. We are merely scrapping aid."

"If we go on aiding and abetting such schools, it will only undermine Islam itself," he said.

Mahathir said Islamic religious studies should go hand in hand with the study of other subjects.

"We do not want to disregard Islam, but rather want

it to be taught in a more proper manner," he said.

Mahathir said a committee, chaired by former Education Ministry director-general, Tan Sri Murad Mohd Noor, was set up to conduct a study on these schools.

Asked if the issue would be worrisome for Umno in the next general elections, he said it should be worrisome for PAS as they want to preserve the schools whereas Umno wants to persevere Islam.

"We want to hear what lies PAS is saying ... we want to record what they are saying," he said.

Anything they say will be used against them, he said.