

Vernacular school pupils to get book loans too

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KUALA LUMPUR.—Poor pupils from vernacular national-type schools will be eligible for text-book loans from next year.

However, only pupils whose parents' have a combined income of less than RM1,000 a month would be eligible, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Currently, only those in national schools are eligible for the scheme.

Dr Mahathir said the scheme had been meant only for national schools to make them attractive for parents to send their children there.

"We have now decided to open the facilities to poor pupils in national-type schools as well," he told reporters yesterday after briefing Umno division leaders on the proposed merit system for the admission of students into public universities.

He warned that certain quarters may politicise the scheme by making it a racial issue.

Its implementation, he said, had nothing to do with the race or ethnic background of pupils.

"Don't make this a racial issue. It is not about race and ethnic background, but the type of schools," he said.

During the two-hour meeting, Dr Mahathir, who is Umno president, touched on various education issues affecting the Malays and social problems caused by easy access to pornographic VCDs in the market.

He said the Government had received information that almost all VCD traders who sell products in the open, including licensed ones, were peddling pornographic VCDs.

"The Government is very concerned over this and that is why we imposed a total ban on the sale of VCDs in the open," he said.

He said a special Cabinet meeting to discuss social problems affecting youths scheduled for yesterday had been postponed.