

UUM's integration bid hits a snag

NST 15 AUG 2002

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ALOR STAR, Wed. — Universiti Utara Malaysia said its effort to get undergraduates from various races to mix has met with resistance from some of the students.

Its deputy vice-chancellor in charge of students' affairs, Dr Mohamed Mustaffa Ishak, said Malay students from the east coast were reluctant to mix with non-Malays compared to those from other States.

He described the level of racial integration between the students at the UUM campus as unsatisfactory and felt more efforts were needed.

He added the university was mulling the idea of awarding bonus points in extra-curricular activities to those who show willingness in mixing with others.

Mohamed said the reluctance among certain students stemmed from limited exposure to other races during their primary and secondary schooling.

"However, this should not be the case now that they are already in university. They should be more mature and willing to mix with

other races.

"We try our best to encourage but we can't force them if they don't want to," he said.

Mohamed said UUM was the first university to impose a policy banning clubs that are based on single ethnic group, religion or region.

He said a club to promote patriotism among the undergraduates was also established.

Mohamed said UUM welcomed the proposal by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad to award incentives to students' clubs which have been innovative in fostering better race relations.

In **Kuching**, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak vice-chancellor Prof Yusuf Hadi said racial and religious disunity was a non-issue because the university had forbidden the formation of racial and religious-based clubs since its formation 10 years ago.

He said Unimas realised the importance of multi-racial and multi-religious harmony and had consciously made efforts to ensure that students of different backgrounds mix with each other.

"Even the rooms in the student

hostels are arranged in such a way that students from a particular State, of a particular religion or of a different race, are not grouped together," he said.

Asked about the usage of English as a medium of instruction, Yusuf said Unimas had advocated that 30 per cent of its course content be taught in English five years ago.

Its medicine, engineering and information technology faculties are taught mainly in English.

In **Miri**, Curtin University of Technology, Sarawak has pledged to encourage and enhance its inter-racial mix in its Lutong campus, near here.

University campus board member Lee Kim Shin said there was a strong inter-racial and international mix in the campus.

"Racial interaction comes naturally at Curtin Sarawak. The university has students from 17 different countries, including Malaysia, and they interact very well," he said, adding that most of the students are members of the university's social clubs.