

Nurture harmony: PM

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KUALA LUMPUR: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad is concerned over poor race relations among university students.

"The students are now keeping to their own races, they don't live together in the same dormitory or room.

"They sit apart in the lecture theatres, in the playing fields, and during co-curricular activities," he said.

"This is an unhealthy situation and is dangerous to the country's future. The reality is that when they leave university to work, they will meet a multiracial society that is different from the society in the university"

Mahathir proposed every university set up an interracial club to conduct social and sports activities, educational outings within and outside the country and picnics.

"They could also conduct courses on the customs, taboos and sensi-

tivities of the various races

"The government will give incentives and prizes to clubs that succeed in getting members of all races and also in coming out with ways to further foster ties among them," he said when launching Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman (Utar).

Mahathir said although Utar is a private university, efforts must be made to attract as many bumiputra students as possible.

At the same time, he did not want universities to become "certificate mills" that serve only as conduits for knowledge from outside.

He said the universities should contribute towards reducing the supremacy of western thinkers in the various fields, including political science, by cultivating original thinking.

"The time has come for us to question the western thinking which now

lords over the world until anyone who questions it is regarded as a heretic.

"Moreover, local universities must be open to all races. The national language and English should be the medium of instruction right from school.

"If the languages of the races are used exclusively in science and mathematics, their universities will be closed to other races and this is unhealthy for a multiracial nation."

Mahathir said speaking in other languages would not change a person's identification with his race.

He said those demanding that the identity of their race not be sullied would only lead to other groups making the same demands.

"When all the parties remain stubborn and set aside the interests of the country, the unity and harmony that we have nurtured all this while will be destroyed."