

# Racial divide widening, says Dr M

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BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN: Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has expressed concern over the unhealthy trend of racial polarisation that has affected the very young in Malaysian schools.

"In our schools now, we can see an unhealthy development taking place. Students now like to mix with others who are only from their own race.

"There was a time when we had students of all races mixing

well together. However, it seems that now, the Chinese only want to go to Chinese schools, Indians prefer Tamil schools and Malays want to send their children to religious schools.

"If this continues, the different races in Malaysia will not be able to interact and understand each other anymore," he said during a dialogue with Malaysian businessmen and professionals working here.

Dr Mahathir said he was sad to note that the Government's

effort to set up Vision Schools and to use the English language to teach Science and Mathematics in all schools had met with a barrage of criticism and suspicion.

"Vision Schools are meant to enable Chinese, Malay and Tamil schools to operate in one campus.

"We need to revive this multiracial spirit that was very prominent in the past.

"However, there are some who call themselves Malay nationalists and Chinese nation-

alists and they oppose such moves," he said.

To a question, Dr Mahathir said some had used Islamic issues to try and create a rift between Malays and non-Malays.

The Prime Minister said he was saddened to note that there were people who had threatened not to vote for Barisan Nasional because of such issues.

The Government, he said, was trying to reason with those opposing the plans to accept the

Vision School idea and the plan to revert to English in teaching Science and Maths.

On bilateral ties, Dr Mahathir said the Federal Government wanted to facilitate easier cross-border travel from Sarawak to Brunei to Sabah by using the smart card system.

However, Brunei had not yet agreed to adopt a similar system and the two governments were working out a solution, he said.

"We (the Federal Government) understand the problems faced by Malaysians who want to travel from Sarawak to Sabah via Brunei.

"I know you have to stamp your passports at least eight times per trip. A smart card system will solve this problem but Brunei has yet to agree."

Earlier at a press conference, Dr Mahathir stressed that Malaysia and Brunei enjoyed excellent ties despite the deadlock.