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## Intensifying student integration programmes

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PASIR GUDANG, Sun. - The Education Ministry will intensify its student integration programmes to ensure that racial extremism has no place in Malaysian schools.

Education Director-General Datuk Abdul Rafie Mahat said it was imperative that schoolchildren be given an early start in the integration process to better understand cultures and customs outside of their own.

He said uniformed bodies and camps could go a long way in ensuring that students from different backgrounds had the chance to mix freely with one another.

"We have included activities which promote racial unity and integration in the school co-curriculum. But most of these programmes are held at secondary level.

"Apart from increasing the number of activities, we will now have similar ones for primary schoolchildren to provide ample opportunity for them to mix around," he said.

Abdul Rafie was speaking after officiating at the Polytechnic Sports Council's Fourth National Sports Carnival held at Pasir Gudang stadium here today.

He was asked to comment on Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's speech at the MCA general assembly yesterday, warning the Chinese community of the dangers of racial extremism.

Abdul Rafie said the Vision School concept was an excellent way of promoting racial integration as it brought students from vernacular and Government schools together.

He called on parents to be more supportive of Vision Schools and enrol their children in schools promoting racial integration.

"Some parents select schools that teach in one medium, so we have to get these schools to accept a mixed approach," he added.

On the sports carnival, Abdul Rafie said sporting activities would develop the students' physical condition and well-being apart from providing an opportunity for racial integration.

"These events would help prepare them to meet challenges in life outside of campus," he added.

He said the building of new polytechnics was progressing smoothly, with one in Merlimau, Malacca expected to open its doors to about 300 students in October.

"In May next year, the Tanjung Malim Polytechnic in Pera and the Kulim Polytechnic in Kedah will also have their inaugural enrolment of 300 each."

He said the polytechnics in Arau in Perlis, Bandar Muadzam Syah in Pahang and Sabak Bernam in Selangor were still under construction and should be completed by next year.

"We are completing these polytechnics at a cost of RM250 million each so that students living in the vicinity have access to further education," he added.