

Start young

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School the best place to bring races together, says PM

BY STEPHEN THEN

MIRI: The school is the best place to start national integration and racial harmony, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said.

He said school was where the young could be brought together more effectively.

Speaking to a crowd of about 3,000 students, teachers, political leaders and community leaders when declaring open a new building block for SMK Chung Hua Miri here yesterday, he defined a truly Malaysian school as one that should have a healthy mix of students from all races.

"This will enable students from different races to forge closer rapport among each other. We want all races to have a good relationship with each other.

"That is why we have introduced the concept of Vision School, to get schools using the three main mediums of exchange of Bahasa Malaysia, Mandarin and Tamil to be located in the same area.

"We want them to hold assemblies together, eat together and play in the same field so that each race will not distinguish themselves from others," he said.

Dr Mahathir expressed pleasant surprise to find this healthy racial mix already existing here in Miri.

He said he was happy to find that in SMK Chung Hua Miri, some 20% of stu-

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PM: Practise moderation, tolerance, sensitivity towards all

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dents were bumiputras and there were students from the three major races and also native groups from the state.

"I was quite amazed to find a Malay girl speaking fluent Chinese. The Chinese of course are already so fluent in Bahasa Malaysia.

"The students in this school are also trilingual in Bahasa Malaysia, English and Mandarin.

"This fits very well with our concept of building a multi-racial society," he said.

Later, when declaring open the new Miri Airport Complex, Dr Mahathir said he wanted the practice of moderation, tolerance and sensitivity towards all races, religions and cultures to be followed by government leaders and the people after he retires from the public scene.

He said he also wanted the present political system of fair representation of all races in the state and Federal governments to be retained.

"The new prime minister or the new chief ministers must continue this racial integration formula created by Tunku Abdul Rahman," he said.

"This formula has shaped a Malaysian nation that is tolerant to all faiths, to all races, to all ethnic groups.

"That formula sparked a climate of peace and harmony, which in turn led to the creation of a climate conducive for internal growth and stability and which attracted a lot of foreign investors.

"Please ensure that this formula of success in Malaysia is retained," he said.

Dr Mahathir, who is due to step down as Prime Minister at the end of October, said he was grateful that radical thoughts and actions had not eroded the general principles of Malaysians and that people in the peninsula, Sarawak and Sabah had integrated well since the three regions came together and formed Malaysia.