

Dr M backs single-stream, slams Chinese educationists
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Former premier Dr Mahathir today backed the proposal to introduce a single-stream school system in Malaysia, but lamented that the topic was still a taboo.

"You cannot even talk about it (merging the three school systems) in this country," said the 84-year-old former premier, adding that the Chinese educationists were "vehemently" against the idea.

According to Mahathir at a press conference following the launch of an art exhibition by Raja Shahrizan, he blamed the educationists for not wanting Chinese students to mix with Malay or Indian students.

"They must be Chinese first, not Malaysian," he said.

Mahathir said that only Malaysia has the unique system of having different streams of education as other countries have only one stream despite having large migrant population. He cited United States, Canada and Australia as examples.

He also pointed out that even Switzerland, which has three official languages, has an education system which provides for students to learn all three languages in the same school.

"That is why I introduced the vision school (concept), which comprises three streams in one campus. That way, students of different races can at least meet each other," he said.

However, he said that the system was rejected and that was the reason why Malaysians cannot achieve unity.

Ex-Perlis mufti a learned man

Mahathir is also mystified on why former Perlis mufti Dr Mohd Asri Zainul Abidin was arrested.

"Even Umno and the current prime minister have invited him to talk and he (Asri) speaks rationally," he commented, questioning the motive behind the arrest.

"I have spoken to him many times and he did not try to make me a Wahhabi follower," he said.

He described Asri as a learned man who understands Islamic history and the teachings of the Quran.

Asri was arrested on Perlis mufti by Selangor Islamic Religious Department (Jais) on Sunday night for delivering religious talks without authorisation.