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Mature society crucial for nation's future, says Dr M

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KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysians must work together towards a more mature society and overcome racial barriers to ensure a brighter future for the country, former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad said.

"The political situation today has seen much less closeness between races and we seem to have become more racist as time passes," he said in his closing keynote address at the Perdana Leadership's CEO Forum 2013 held at Berjaya Times Square Hotel yesterday.

"When one is asked to predict the future, the best thing to do is look at the past, as trends form and tend to continue in straight lines.

"In history, we have seen the widening gap between races through the splitting of schools (into vernacular schools) after the national education system was implemented," he said.

The nation's longest serving premier was speaking to more than 500 high-ranking executives during a presentation entitled "Better Times Ahead For Malaysia?", discussing trends and predictions for the country's future.

Mahathir said even the educated seemed to not be as close as they should be, due to their "strong adherence to race and also because of some politics" and pointed out that religion has also been a barrier.

"What we need is for the people to come together. We should have less separation in schools and not be afraid of 'annoying' people".

Mahathir said the ideal system would be to make English compulsory, having language classes open to all, teaching science and maths in English and other subjects in Bahasa Malaysia.

He urged the government of the day not to fear displeasing the people, but rather focus on



ZULKIFLI ERSAL/THESUN

Berjaya Corp founder Tan Sri Vincent Tan shares a light moment with Mahathir at the Perdana Leadership's CEO Forum 2013 at Berjaya Times Square Hotel yesterday.

building a strong government.

"In a multi-racial society like Malaysia, unlimited freedom may result in fighting and quarrels," he said, urging people to "tone down and self-regulate" their freedoms to ensure progress.

He also took a jab at the Opposition coalition for not being satisfied with the 13th general election

results despite having their demand for indelible ink fulfilled. "When the Opposition says something, please ignore it because they won't give up even when we comply.

"They are not interested in making things better. They are trying to make an issue (of things)," he said.