

**Better ways to spend than on arms: Ex-PM
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Is RM6 billion too much to spend on warships and is Malaysia engaging in an arms race? Maybe, is the considered opinion of former prime minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

"We may not be good friends with our neighbour in the South but we have no intentions of going to war. Rather than buying all sorts of weapons, it would be better to use the money on other domestic needs," he said.

Drawing on his own experience he recalled that when trying to sell something, arms dealers will always say that the country's neighbours have the same thing, "so the military will feel upset that they don't have the same toys as the other guy... Even during my time an F-15 was bought without my knowledge."

To a question from the audience at the Malay Dilemma Symposium in Kuala Lumpur this morning, Mahathir said that this would only benefit arms dealers, something the government should be wary of.

On Petaling Jaya Utara parliamentarian Tony Pua's claims that the ships are overpriced, Mahathir said: "It is (Pua's) job to criticise. I see no wrong in the government explaining why the costs are too high."

Many from the audience of 2,000, mostly university students, had lined up to pose questions in the hour-long session. Below are some of the highlights:

Why is there no continuity in leadership of Umno and the government?

The lack of quality has been a problem due to the culture of *cantas* (sabotage). There is a weakness in the Umno membership system, where members join at division level but capable ones are not allowed in by the division leader because he fears that someone better than him can usurp his position.

So when he leaves, the people who take over are less capable than he is, and the quality of Umno leadership goes down.

Those rejected from Umno because of this join PAS so that's why we see lots of doctors, engineers and lawyers in PAS, and in the end Umno will lose out.

The same is the case for the government, whereby by right, cabinet positions should be given to people with capabilities and not division or branch leaders of Umno.

What caused the fissure in the Malay community?

This is caused by politics... only in politics can someone without capabilities be appointed into positions of power. There was even a minister who could not read or write-something you would need even to be an office boy.

But in politics it's possible to go very high (even if you are illiterate) so people start jostling for positions to become YB, to get a big car, become Tan Sri, etc.

What will happen to bumiputera automobile traders if the government ceases to provide approve permits (AP) in 2015?

If the AP holders had used it to build their business they would have been prosperous, like the owner of Naza motors, who can still do business without APs in competition with other races. Others had obtained APs and sold them, so it is good that we are not giving it to them anymore.

Are 'liberal Malays' among the causes for inter-community friction?

The 'liberal Malays' think that they have managed to cross the bridge to riches. Some even say that they did it without any help from the government. But I think if they are really honest they would admit that the policies did help, even if only a little.

These people do not know how to be grateful. They cross the bridge and then burn down the bridge for others, saying that the bridge was useless. In the Quran, it states that people who are know how to be grateful will reap rewards while those who don't will receive painful retribution.

What values should Malays adopt to move forward?

The Japanese have a sense of shame, but it is not the same kind of shame Malays know. The Japanese are ashamed if they fail to fulfill their obligations, or if they don't do something well. Malays can even go to jail and no feel ashamed, thinking that they'll be released tomorrow so it's no problem.

There is no sense of shame for not working hard, for producing shabby work. It is this sense of shame that can determine our future.

Don't you think that Malays have been pampered for too long?

I do think that the Malays have been pampered, to a certain extent, but not in all parts. We are asking for what is rightfully ours but at the same time we cannot be too reliant on a protector that is the government.

We need to put in our best effort first, and only if we fail do we ask for help, because it's not as if we are really that stupid.