

Racist game over, Mahathir
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Dr Mahathir Mohamad's 'Malay Dilemma' was an instant hit among the emergent Malay state capitalists in Umno since it provided the instant recipe for them to rally populist support for their bid for power just before May 13, 1969.

It was the time-tested recipe for opportunistic politicians to use 'race' as the rallying cry for political support. Hitler's 'Mein Kampf' was of course the model of such a political route.

Since the demise of Hitler and his race-steeped ideology and the price paid in blood by the freedom loving peoples of the world, racism, racial discrimination and other forms of intolerance have been outlawed in the world community.

If not for the duplicity of the arms-dealing countries that control the world media as well, racism and racial discrimination prevalent in our country would have been exposed long ago. Today, we only hear the occasional grumbles from disgruntled foreign investors who are frustrated by the New Economic Policy.

The very existence of racially-based political parties – Umno, MCA and MIC – is an anachronism way past their sell-by date. Where else in the world today can one find political parties that are restricted to only one race? Politicians from these BN parties – least of all, Dr Mahathir – should be the last to lecture anyone on racism.

Mahathir repeats the lie of 'official' historians that Umno, MCA and MIC came together at Independence because of the failure of multi-ethnic parties. My new book 'A People's History of Merdeka' (to be published this year), using documents from the British archives sets out to demolish this myth and to set the record straight.

For all their faults, at least the DAP, PKR, PAS and other multi-ethnic parties in this country have the courage and the principles to eschew 'race' in their political organization and national policies. Their opportunism in their appeal to voters is a separate question altogether.

It is sad to see Mahathir in his twilight years still clinging to his race-tinged perceptions, waving the keris and being the patron to the far-right Malay-supremacy group Perkasa, oblivious to the intellectual trends since the Age of Enlightenment.

I have always said that we will only truly be a united nation when we ban race-based political parties from our midst and ratify the Convention on the Eradication of racism and Racial Discrimination.

This can be done through a Race Relations Act and Equal Opportunities Commission. It would be the mother of all transformations!

It is time Malaysians told racists in our midst: "The game's over."

As someone has said, "Wisdom doesn't necessarily come with age. Sometimes age just shows up all by itself."

The writer is director of human rights group Suaram

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