

Is meritocracy-phobic Dr M declaring war on NEM?

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Former premier Dr Mahathir Mohamad's vitriol against meritocracy may well be an attempt to undermine Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak's New Economic Model, which outlines plans for needs-based affirmative action.

According to DAP advisor Lim Kit Siang, Mahathir's condemnation of meritocracy advocates as "racist" in the latter's blog yesterday, appears to be a declaration of war against Najib.

mahathir at bum 2009 bloggers conference talking about sex and old age 290509 01"With his denunciation of meritocracy, Mahathir (right) is rubbishing the NEM's diagnosis and prescription to resolve the twin nation-building and economic crises confronting the country," he said.

At the launch of the NEM on March 30, Najib's speech stated that a "renewed affirmative action policy" would be build on market needs, merit, market friendliness and transparency in a bid to enhance Malaysia's competitiveness.

This was vehemently opposed by among certain Malay rights advocates such as Perkasa and the Malay Consultative Council (MPM), most prominently at the latter's Bumiputra Economic Congress in May, which was officiated by Mahathir.

Other than the NEM, Mahathir had also been critical of Najib's 1Malaysia concept, claiming that it was vague and caused different communities to interpret it differently.

Both the NEM and 1Malaysia are described as the four pillars of Najib's administration, the other two being the Government Transformation Programme (GTP) and the 10th Malaysia Plan.

Has Dr M forsaken Vision 2020?

Lim said that Mahathir's contention that "meritocrats are racist too" was a huge step backwards for the former premier who coined Vision 2020, which aims to form a "Bangsa Malaysia (Malaysian race)" and transform the nation into a high-income economy.

"In one fell stroke yesterday, Mahathir had backtracked and repudiated Vision 2020 and 'Bangsa Malaysia' causing a whole generation of Malaysians nurtured on Vision 2020... to feel cheated," said Lim.

In a strongly worded blog posting yesterday, Mahathir had outlined how the Singapore's People's Action Party's (PAP) "Malaysian Malaysia" slogan in the early 1960s, which he termed as racist, had now evolved into "meritocracy".

tunku abdul rahman 290809He argued that it was because of PAP's attempt to "play up Chinese sentiments to the core" with this slogan, then premier Tunku Abdul Rahman (right) booted the Singapore from the Malaysian federation.

However, he said that modern Malays understood the "implications of meritocracy" and therefore rejected it.

"Today we have Perkasa and other Malay NGOs who are as openly concerned about the

Malays as Umno once was," he said.

"What we are seeing today is not a campaign against racism but a campaign by racists against racists. The meritocrats are as much racists as the Malay NGOs and Perkasa.

"Incidentally by writing this, I know the meritocrat racists will condemn me as racist. So be it," he added.

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