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Dr M taken to task for 'moving backwards'

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KOTA KINABALU: Former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's play of the race card runs contrary to his idea of a Bangsa Malaysia and Vision 2020.

DAP adviser Lim Kit Siang said it was unhealthy to do so as Malaysians were moving towards the creation of a Bangsa Malaysia.

"Now that we are moving in the direction he set, he cannot go backwards," the Ipoh Timur MP said after launching a Kaamatan celebration at the Tanjung Aru Plaza here yesterday.

He said the general election had shown that voting trends were no longer based on race or religion and that Malaysians wanted to see a free and fair democratic society.

"It has been 50 years since independence.

"We should be Malaysian and not retreat into communal ideas.

"The people are rising above their ethnic stereotypes and voting as Malaysians now.

"It is unhealthy to play the race card now. He should be setting a good example."

Lim was commenting on Dr

Mahathir's statement that Malays and their institutions were losing respect and their privileges were being questioned.

Dr Mahathir had said that Malays had become too comfortable with being the "tuan" (master) and were inclined to look for shortcuts, to their detriment.

"The Malays have loosened their grip on political power to the point where non-Malays no longer respect them and their institutions," he had said, adding that everything deemed as Malay privileges had been questioned and challenged by non-Malays.

He had also said the Malays were doing nothing to counter the situation and strengthen their positions.

Malaysian Indian Businessmen president P. Sivakumar said Dr Mahathir should not have talked about communal politics which could hamper unity and the way forward.

He said it was a pity that a politician of his stature had said that non-Malays had questioned the special privileges of Malays.

"Even the Hindu Rights Ac-

tion Force did not question Malay special privileges.

"They only spoke about temple demolitions and lack of opportunities, besides wanting to narrow the economic disparity."

Sivakumar said Malaysians should be talking about meeting the challenges brought about by globalisation instead of talking about race.

He said it was also wrong for Dr Mahathir to say that Malays were not doing anything to strengthen their position as the community had been in control of Malaysian politics for 50 years.

"The question of *tuan* (master) does not arise any more as the world got rid of slavery and feudalism a long time ago. In the eyes of God, all men are equal," he said.

Malaysian Punjabi Chamber of Commerce and Industries president Datuk Daljit Singh Dhaliwal said non-Malays were not questioning the rights or special privileges of Malays.

He said they only wanted to know where they stood in terms of power-sharing in the government.

Daljit said the "labelling of people according to race should not be carried out as this does not work any more".

He called on Dr Mahathir to "avoid race politics and to think and treat each Malaysian as a member of Bangsa Malaysia".

He said Sabah and Sarawak had won many seats for the Barisan Nasional, although the parties comprised Malays and non-Malays.

People's Progressive Party Federal Territory chief A. Chandrakumanan was surprised by Dr Mahathir's statement that the special rights of Malays were under seige.

He said no one had questioned Malays rights and privileges as these were protected under the Federal Constitution.

"Moreover, we live in a multi-racial country. We should not aggravate one another over matters which are deemed sensitive.

"Rather, we should work together."

He said as a former prime minister, Dr Mahathir should speak on behalf of all Malaysians, not only the Malays.