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Dr Mahathir to drop 'race' in official forms

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KUALA LUMPUR: Former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad is for the dropping of "race" and the "religion" column from official forms and documents.

He said the columns were unnecessary and should have been dropped a long time ago.

"It is quite difficult to do this because, sometimes, the officers said they need to identify who's who but we should (drop the columns)," he said after receiving an Honorary Doctor of Medicine at the International Medical University in Bukit Jalil yesterday.

On Tuesday, Deputy Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin said the government was studying the possibility of dropping the "race" column in most official forms and documents.

Dr Mahathir said one's race can be identified according to the name and only some, who have converted to another religion, would retain their old name.

But he said the "sex" (gender) column should be maintained in the forms and documents.

"But for most of the majority, if you are a Chinese, then the name is Chinese. The only problem here is that some people do not know how to differentiate the gender by looking at a Chinese name.

"It is easier to identify the gender of a Malay or an Indian. For example, the Indians have 'anak lelaki' (son of) or 'anak perempuan' (daughter of) in their names."

He said it was also most likely that a person who has a Malay name is a Muslim and an Indian name would imply that the person is a Hindu or Christian.

Asked whether it would be a difficult for the government to arrive at a decision to drop the "race" column, Dr Mahathir said all laws were subject to amendment and the government could proceed if it wanted to.