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PRIME NEWS

Dr M: Racial divide widening

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GE13 AFTERMATH:

Some causing disunity after polls, says former PM

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THE political aftermath of the 13th General Election which is closely tied to rising racial sentiments, should be pondered upon for the sake of the country's future, said Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad.

The former prime minister said racial gaps had widened quite significantly to an extent that some had begun inciting hatred among one another, especially after the Internal Security Act was revoked.

"We provide them the freedom (of speech), but now they have the gall to insult Prophet Muhammad,

besides coming out with disrespectful statements against Muslims. None of this had happened when all races were united to support Barisan Nasional," said Dr Mahathir in an interview published in *Mingguan Malaysia* yesterday.

He said Umno was still the choice party among Malays based on the electoral results as most were turned off by opposition leader Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim's promise to appoint DAP stalwart Lim Kit Siang as deputy prime minister and home minister.

Dr Mahathir said BN used to record a two-thirds majority win in general elections.

Today, he said the Chinese had deserted the coalition while unity among Malays had sundered despite efforts by BN to ensure the welfare of all races.

"Many are not thankful. (For example) the financial aid received by opposition supporters has been relegated as taxpayers' money. Hence to them, it has been theirs all along.



Former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad says Umno should embark on a major membership drive

"In the past, the BN government provided them with the environment and opportunities that had created jobs and facilitated businesses. We did not use the people's money, but we gave them the means to earn more."

On the waning Chinese support, Dr Mahathir said Umno must initiate efforts to strengthen its Malay

support base first by setting up a larger membership drive and consider views from the younger generation.

"As of now, there are leaders in Umno who will not give way to younger members for fear of losing their party positions. This should not have happened and it is an image that needs to be changed. Only then Umno can become stronger.

"We may not have to depend on Chinese votes, but we still need them, nevertheless. We should treat the Chinese fairly and do not take advantage of them or their rights."

Dr Mahathir said when the New Economic Policy was implemented, the Chinese were happy and very supportive of the government because they too, benefited from the measure.

"Many of those who were millionaires are now billionaires. They started their businesses in this country and now they can invest overseas. We cannot take away

their rights. If they can earn a living and be happy about it, you can count on their support."

He said the opposition had also called for meritocracy to be implemented as opposed to social justice.

"(There are cases) that those who are successful are usually from well-to-do families who have access (to quality education and living standard). But the outcome is likely to be different among those who are not of the same background and have potential but are impeded by poverty."

Dr Mahathir said in a democracy, accepting loss was pertinent to maintaining the country's security and order, lest Malaysia was turned into another Egypt which is now wrought by uncertainty.

He said the Bersih movement for example, with its demand for change in the electoral system, only protested when the opposition lost the election and claimed that the government of the day as "illegal".