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Not much space for Dr M's party to thrive, says daily

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KUALA LUMPUR: It is unfortunate that Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad has opted to tread the old path by setting up a political party for the Malays and embracing "antiquated racism" in doing so.

In an opinion piece titled "Mahathir and his racist party", *Sin Chew Daily* published that Dr Mahathir's motive behind establishing a new party was not to steer the nation towards greater development or any lofty vision, but merely to drive out Umno president and Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak.

Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad

"Where political reality is concerned, there isn't much space for Dr Mahathir's new party to thrive, to be honest.

"Given the fact that Dr Mahathir's desires to wrest away some of Umno's supporters, it is, therefore, logical that his new party is a Malay-only entity with Umno the specific hit target.

"Sadly, Dr Mahathir's most logical option is never a good thing for a multicultural society that struggles to free itself from the shackles of racism.

"His new party will only push the Malays deeper into the racist mud-pool," the Chinese daily stated.

It was reported that former Umno No. 2 Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin had submitted the registration of Dr Mahathir's new political party — Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia (Parti Pribumi) with the Registrar of Societies.

Muhyiddin was quoted as saying that the party's membership would be opened to Malays, as well as Bumiputeras in Sabah and Sarawak.

He said associate membership would be available for non-Bumiputeras.

However, *Sin Chew* said while anyone could set up a new political party in a democratic society, the rationale behind establishing a racist party in current times was questionable.

"The earlier announcement by Dr Mahathir to form a new political party was not met with much objection.

"However, when the outline of the new party becomes clearer and that it will only recruit Malay or Bumiputera members, some began to express their disapproval."

The daily noted that the country's politics had largely been dominated by racist parties before independence. It said Umno, MCA, MIC were all born this way, and had been dominating the country's politics for more than half a century.

"There was little mutual understanding but more skepticism among ethnic groups in the country prior to independence, making racist parties a natural option for many.

"Nevertheless, the presence of such race-based parties has not done our multicultural society any good, but has instead become a formidable barrier for further inter-racial mingling.

"Because these parties thrive mainly on struggling for the interests of one specific ethnic community, distinction between 'we' and 'others' has become unavoidable.

"When a particular racist party or its leader comes under threat, it will tend to lean further towards racism in a bid to build up and consolidate its support base, painting other ethnic communities as imaginary rivals."

It reported that often the Chinese community became a convenient scapegoat in such witch-hunting exercises.

It said that such political manipulations had gone on for decades and done irreparable damage to national unity and harmonious integration.

"Despite having been independent for almost 60 years, our country remains haunted by old racist issues.

"To wean ourselves from the scourge of racist politics, it is imperative that we reject racist parties. Fortunately, racist politics has drawn less interest in the country in recent years, thanks to progressive democratic thinking that has given rise to multiracial political parties.

"The emergence of PKR is a landmark political event that proves the relevance of a Malay-dominated multiracial party.

"Racist parties took shape out of the country's unique historical needs, and it is now time we deliver ourselves from the quagmire of racism towards a more accommodating and harmonious society."

The paper opined that as far as the political reality was concerned, there wasn't much space for Dr Mahathir's new party to thrive.

"Dr Mahathir has made his choice between reality and idealism.

"He is never an idealist but very much a pragmatist himself, a label which under certain context, is more derogatory than complimentary."