

# Govt to be more selective in giving contracts to Bumiputeras

**NEW YORK:** The government will be more selective in awarding contracts and opportunities to Bumiputera businessmen to prevent leakages in its affirmative action policy, said Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

"We want to ensure that those who got the contracts carry them out. If they don't, we will take them back," he said at Columbia University's World Leaders Forum here on Wednesday.

He was asked why the policy had not met its goals and how the new government planned to implement things differently.

"The fact is the Malays are far behind the Chinese. To say (the policy) is not helping them is not correct. Many are helped and many have succeeded. For example, previously, scholarships were given only to the top student. We decided to give to No. 2, 3 and 4. And they have performed."

He said one example was the medical profession, where Malay doctors represented only two per cent of the country's doctors when the policy was introduced. Today, that figure had risen to 40 per cent.

"We have corrected the imbalance in the medical profession. In other professions too we have made some corrections," he said,

adding that there were now Malays who did well in business.

He said the policy was needed to address the disparity between the rich and poor.

"If you do away with affirmative action, what do you want to do?"

"If you do nothing, the disparity is going to be worse and there will be tensions between races, and between the rich and the poor."

On Malaysia's success in reducing racial tensions, the prime minister said whenever there was great disparity between the rich and the poor, there would always be tension.

"If the disparity between the rich and the poor is amplified by being of different races, the tendency towards violence will be greater.

"We cannot change the race of people, but we can change their economic performance. So we help the weak to catch up with the rich community. That was what we were doing through affirmative action."

He said it had been difficult because the poor often did not have skills to use opportunities and capital to grow their wealth.

"So we have to give them consideration. We have to train them, educate them and protect them."