

# Dr M comes under fire over defiant stance on 'multiracial nation'

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad was yesterday criticised by several quarters — including a one-time mentee — over his claim that promoting Malaysia as a multiracial country was unconstitutional.

Nusantara Academy for Strategic Research senior fellow Dr Azmi Hassan said there was no contradiction between promoting Malaysia as a multiracial country and what is stated in the Federal Constitution.

“But to interpret Malay priorities in the Federal Constitution as Malays being the dominant race, while the rest of the races play a supporting role, I don't know where this interpretation comes from.”

Political analyst Dr Ainul Adzelle Hasnul said although a “multiracial country” was not specifically mentioned in the Federal Constitution, it does not mean that non-Malays should be denied their rights.

“Article 153 of the Federal Constitution mentions the special position of Malays. However, this does not mean that it denies the rights of the rest of the Malaysians.

“I don't think there is such a notion that Malays are being marginalised in their own country because their special rights are preserved.

“Yes, there is freedom of speech, but don't be insensitive towards other races,” he told the *New Straits Times*.

Mujibu Abdul Muis, a fellow at the Institution of Malay Rulers Chair, Universiti Teknologi Mara, said Dr Mahathir was merely attempting to gain support and attention of the Malay community as the state elections draw near.

However, he said, such



People of various races celebrating National Day in Dataran Merdeka, Kuala Lumpur, last year. FILE PIC

provocative statements would only damage the image of Malays as it went against the Malay Rulers' call for politicians not to touch on the 3R issues of race, religion and royalty in politics.

“The authorities should not only be strict towards Dr Mahathir but anyone who does the same by inciting (racial and) and religious sensitivities, (a matter) that is getting worrying.”

Political scientist Professor Dr Wong Chin Huat from the Jeffrey Cheah Institute on Southeast Asia described Dr Mahathir as a desperate child seeking attention that belongs in the past.

“Sadly, (he) is destroying his own standing and the respect that many Malaysians had for him in the past.

“He might want to come up next with more outlandish state-

ments to prove his relevance. Sadly, the more he tries, the more irrelevant he would be.”

Senior DAP leader Dr P. Ramasamy said Dr Mahathir seemed to be running out of ideas.

He said his attacks against DAP, especially, seemed out of place considering that when he was prime minister the second time around, he needed the support of 42 DAP members of parliament.

He added that Dr Mahathir's earlier idea of “Bangsa Malaysia” was not exactly about promoting Malaysia as the land for Malays and Islam.

“Having lost political power and having lost his deposit in the contest for the parliamentary seat of Langkawi (in the 15th General Election), Dr Mahathir has become a bitter man. So much so that his venom is directed to-

wards the non-Malays in general, and DAP in particular.

“As far as Dr Mahathir is concerned, non-Malays are 'foreigners' despite the fact that his own ancestors are from India.

“Dr Mahathir's exclusive focus on Malaysian politics seems to be the sad reflection of his lack of meaningful impact in changing the course of the political direction of the country.

“His return to racial and religious exclusivity seem to be the function of his deluded thinking; a thinking that seems to be out of touch with reality.

“Dr Mahathir, having lost all relevance, has no choice but to resort to narrow sectarian politics anchored in extremist race politics,” he said.

Malaysian United Democratic Party president Syed Saddiq Syed Abdul Rahman criticised his former mentor, saying the former prime minister should be focusing on uniting the people instead of doing the opposite.

“We believe that an attack on the non-Malays and non-Bumiputeras is equivalent to an attack against all Malaysians.

“The Chinese and Indians of Malaysia treat this country as their motherland.

“The non-Malays of today are the second, third and fourth generations who were born here, lived here, studied here, worked here, and will most likely shut their eyes for the last time in this blessed land.”

The DAP wing in the United Kingdom said Dr Mahathir's remarks had raised concern among Malaysians residing there.

They said the “inappropriate and inaccurate” remarks could aggravate racial divisions among Malaysians in the UK.

“While acknowledging the importance of freedom of speech, it is our view that any allegations which lacked accuracy and intends to disrupt Malaysia's harmonious coexistence as a multiracial nation should be strongly disapproved.

“We strongly condemn any attempts to exacerbate racial polarisation among Malaysians and we maintain our stance that Malaysia should be for all, and it is a land where everyone's dreams can be realised through hard work and dedication.”



Syed Saddiq Syed Abdul Rahman