

# Tawfik: Dr M is not a good sport

## Dr Ismail's son talks of his father, golf and Mahathir's lack of grace

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**PETALING JAYA:** Tawfik Ismail, the son of the country's second deputy prime minister, has taken a swing at Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad and his claim that it was unconstitutional to promote a multiracial country. And it was a golf swing.

Tawfik said his father, who was deputy prime minister from 1970 to 1973, was an active sportsman, compared to Dr Mahathir, who appeared uninterested in sports.

"Dr Mahathir is not known to have played any sport, doesn't appear to have team spirit, and as a result doesn't know how to lose gracefully.

"Golf and its etiquette make a gentleman out of you. Dr Mahathir doesn't have that experience," said Tawfik.

The 73-year-old compared the New Economic Policy (NEP) with rules of golf and the handicaps given to amateur players.

"When you become a golfer for the first time, you get a very high handicap. As you improve, you play with a lower handicap as you become better.

"Dr Ismail and (second prime minister) Tun Abdul Razak both played golf. That's how they saw the NEP being implemented," said Tawfik.

"Dr Mahathir sees the handicap the way a doctor sees a lame person - that the person is hand-

icapped for life. That was the way Dr Mahathir conducted business."

On Monday, Dr Mahathir made headlines after declaring that it was unconstitutional to promote a multiracial country.

His remarks have drawn brickbats from various politicians, who had criticised the nonagenarian for fanning racial flames ahead of the upcoming state polls on Aug 12.

Tawfik recalled that, as a child, he and his siblings were placed in the care of Chinese maids. His father encouraged the Chinese maids to teach the children Mandarin and Cantonese.

"He felt that being trilingual would give his children an

advantage in their future," said Tawfik.

"My father was brought up in a multicultural environment unique to Johor Baru with its proximity to Singapore, and as a son of a senior government official, his (Dr Ismail's) father valued the advantages that a secular education would bring to his children," he said.

Tawfik said Dr Mahathir had a different upbringing compared to Dr Ismail.

"He appears not to have had the same exposure," said Tawfik, who added that his father had many Chinese adopted siblings, as his grandparents would adopt children from impoverished families.

"My father always felt that there was no difference between being Malay or Chinese. It's the way you are brought up that makes you different."

Tawfik also said Dr Ismail always valued a secular education.

"He made sure that my uncle and my aunts were given exposure to other values and cultures and they were sent to schools or universities abroad.

"He was very open in absorbing ideas from other races and people," said Tawfik.

Dr Ismail, often described as the "best prime minister the country never had", died at the age of 57 on Aug 2, 1973, from a heart ailment.