

'The future is for all Malaysians

No reason to deny the rights of others, says PM

KUALA LUMPUR: Being Malay should not be a reason to deny others their rights under the Federal Constitution, says Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

"I am a Malay; I respect the Malay culture, tradition, rulers and language, but that does not make me racist or deny the rights of others.

"We all have to take the position that the Constitution is very clear on the position of the Malays, but it is also clear on protecting the welfare of all citizens.

"The future is for all Malaysians," the Prime Minister said during a question-and-answer session at the opening of the International Malaysia Law

Conference here yesterday.

Anwar questioned the insistence by certain quarters that the survival of the nation is dependent on whether it is "purely a Malay country", which then comes at the expense of the rights of others.

His response came after former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad insisted that "Malaysia is a Malay country", despite loud criticism from moderates who defended multiculturalism.

The former prime minister also said the Constitution had never claimed that Malaysia was a multiracial country.

Anwar poured cold water on Dr Mahathir's suggestions, describ-



Changing the narrative:
Anwar attending the International Malaysia Law Conference in Kuala Lumpur.
- Bernama

ing them as a last-ditch effort by the latter to remain relevant after failing to hold on to the Langkawi parliamentary seat in the 15th General Election (GE15).

"(Mahathir) lost his deposit in Langkawi.

"I don't think we should take him very seriously. Of course, this is his last desperate effort to be seen as relevant.

"I am going to make him irrelevant," he said.

Dr Mahathir quit Parti Pejuang Tanah Air (Pejuang), the party he founded, on Feb 10 this year, following its dismal performance in GE15.

It marked Dr Mahathir's first election defeat since 1969.

Following this, the 98-year-old politician went on to pen a 12-point Malay Proclamation aimed at uniting Malays in the country.

Several leaders from PAS and Bersatu then signed the proclamation in support of Dr Mahathir's call.

Anwar also took a swipe at the Opposition for harping on race, questioning why this card is still being flashed around when there are more pressing issues affecting the nation.

"I can't understand why we are still stuck when we are in 2023; we are not talking about governance, economic advancement or digital technology.

"We are fixated on who this country belongs to - the Malays or the Chinese, or the Christians," he said.

Anwar added that his administration will do all it can to move the debate forward towards nation-building.

"If we fail in this narrative and discourse (of multiculturalism), we fail as a nation," he said as he challenged those who supposedly champion Malays yet enrich themselves to give away their wealth to the community.

"They talk about Malay survival. I challenge them: if it's true you want to help the Malays, then surrender half your wealth to the Malays," he said.