

Brickbats over racial rant

'Parti Pendetang' remark gets Dr M skewered again

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PETALING JAYA: Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad is in hot water again for his latest observation on Malaysia's multi-ethnic character.

This time he has called non-Malay based parties "Parti Pendetang" and critics have pointed out that the former prime minister had ignored the contributions of all communities to Malaysia.

In his latest racially-charged rant, Dr Mahathir said these Parti Pendetang (migrant parties) had caused ethnic disharmony as its members refused to assimilate and become Malays.

"We do not see this in countries such as Thailand, the Philippines and Indonesia where there are political parties created for 'pendatang' (migrants)," Dr Mahathir

said in a Sunday night ceramah while campaigning for Perikatan Nasional in the Simpang Jeram by-election.

"But in Malaysia, these 'pendatang' live here and receive the citizenship of this country but are still distancing themselves," said Dr Mahathir, who used to lead a political coalition of Malay and non-Malay parties for over 22 years.

"Even in politics, they are establishing their own parties. This is why there are still racial issues in this country. It is not that we do not like them but they are the ones who do not like us," said the 98-year-old who had recently accused non-Malays of wanting to change Malaysia's name.

The veteran politician then criticised Pakatan Harapan, a coalition which he was instrumental in founding in 2016 and which he led into the historic 14th General Election in 2018.

"Pakatan Harapan is led by a person who tells us that this country does not only belong to the Malays and that it also belongs to others," said Dr Mahathir, who was a prime minister in the 2018-2020 Pakatan administration.

"He wants to give this country away to outsiders. This I cannot accept as we are the ones who explored and opened up the peninsular," said Dr Mahathir, whose paternal grandfather was from Kerala, India.

The next day, PKR deputy information chief Datuk Raman Ramakrishnan pointed out that Umno, the party Dr Mahathir led for 22 years, had worked with non-Malay groups to achieve independence for Malaya in 1957.

Dr Mahathir had also headed Barisan Nasional, a multi-ethnic coalition that includes Umno.

"This country was founded because the leaders of all the main races collectively worked

together for the interest of the nation by signing the agreement, said Ramanan.

"It was MCA and MIC together with Umno which signed all these historic documents. Please reach them. All races worked together to build up Malaysia including those from Sarawak and Sabah, Ramanan said in a statement.

Dr Mahathir had also contradicted himself by making this latest statement while campaigning for a coalition which includes a party led by non-Malays, he said.

"By Dr Mahathir's logic, Gerakan is a 'parti pendatang' as it is led by Dominic Lau. So, what is Gerakan doing in Perikatan Nasional?"

"He may not care about leaving a legacy but he should be responsible to ensure that Malaysia remains united as a country and people," added the Malaysian Indian Community Transformation Unit Special Committee chairman.