

DR M RAPPED FOR 'DISLOYAL' COMMENT

Various groups criticise ex-PM's remarks on Chinese and Indians

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FORMER prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad has come under fire for his comments on race and religion in a TV interview.

Social Protection Contributors Advisory Association Malaysia international labour advisor Calistus Antony D'Angelus yesterday said divisions based on race and religion had been used for political convenience in the country.

"The protagonist-in-chief, who can count himself as the father of Malaysia's division, is two-time prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

"He ascended to Malaysia's highest office through propagating a misguided and mischievous account of race and religious dynamics, eugenics and constantly altering the events of history.

"His latest diatribe, which involves comments about Chinese and Indians and their place as Malaysians, is another attempt to



Former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, in an interview with Chennai-based Indian satellite television channel Thanthi TV, said Malaysia belongs to the people who founded it. SCRENGRAB OF THANTHI TV'S YOUTUBE VIDEO

leave a trail of destruction."

D'Angelus said to stay in power and keep himself in public view, Dr Mahathir threw up theories of race, which were then capitalised by politicians, who were equally opportunistic and did not care for the progress of Malaysians or its people.

"That a multiracial and multi-religious country with a large proportion of minorities, probably more than most countries in the world, would have conflagra-

tions from time to time must be expected.

"We could have worked through them and come out stronger had the divisions not been institutionalised and entrenched by the likes of Dr Mahathir.

"The division sown has not brought benefit to Malaysia or Malaysians."

Political parties also criticised Dr Mahathir for questioning Indian Malaysians' patriotism.

DAP chairman Lim Guan Eng said it was inappropriate for Dr Mahathir, who had previously endorsed the idea of a "Malaysian race", to say something so unbecoming of a former premier.

Lim claimed the 98-year-old's remark seemed like a person who had lost the support of the masses and was desperate to regain it.

He said it was clear that Dr Mahathir's comment was politically motivated.

Because of his failures, Lim said, Dr M had to choose an extremist, racist and dangerous path for support instead

Malaysian United Democratic Alliance called on Dr Mahathir to apologise for saying Malaysian Indians and Chinese were "not completely loyal to the country".

Acting president Amira Aisya said this was not the first time Dr Mahathir has attacked and demeaned Malaysians.

She said people from different races and religions in Malaysia had worked hard to build the nation, and not solely through Dr Mahathir's effort.

"The prejudiced attitude towards race, religion and skin colour is also the stance of an individual who hates and rejects harmony.

"What is the outcome of accusing the Indian community of disloyalty?"

"This accusation can also be exploited by extremist groups.

"After all these years of Dr Mahathir's administration, are the

Indian community still burdened and forced to defend themselves against his prejudice?"

She said no Malaysian should be accused and belittled for their loyalty.

"We are all loyal to Malaysia. "The more appropriate question to ask is whether Dr Mahathir wants to safeguard the nation or wants to see the people divided."

National Unity Minister Datuk Aaron Ago Dagang said Malaysians, including political leaders, were urged not to make statements that touched on religious and racial sensitivities to the point of causing hatred.

Aaron, in his post, said political leaders should be role models, fostering unity, goodwill and togetherness.

He urged people to learn, understand and take heed of historical events, so that they could continue to enjoy peace and harmony.

Dr Mahathir, in an interview with Chennai-based Indian satellite television channel Thanthi TV, said Malaysian Indians and Chinese were not completely loyal to the country as they still wanted to identify themselves with their countries of origin.

He stood by his previous remarks that Malaysia belonged to the people who founded the country.

The interview was uploaded to Thanthi TV's YouTube channel last Thursday. Additional reporting by Aliza Shah