

Ex-premier blames 'extremists' for increased race strife
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PUTRAJAYA, Sept 12 — Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamed said today that “extremists” from each of the country’s three major races were making increasingly unwarranted demands, adding that such incidents did not happen during his tenure as prime minister.

The former PM said that Malays, Chinese and Indians needed to accept the fact that it was impossible for the government to fully comply with each community’s demands.

“Each race must accept that not a 100 per cent of their demands will be met... the three races have to accept that they will only get half of their demands,” he said today during a taped television interview session with RTM.

He agreed when asked whether he thought there were external factors causing increased racial friction due to demands made by some racial groups.

“There are the extremist groups, the irresponsible ones... all three races have their extremists.”

Dr Mahathir said “freedom” did not mean countless demands could be made, and said doing so often led into clashes among racial groups.

“For example, we allow the Chinese to use their own language in (vernacular) schools, we do that because we understand their needs.

“But then there are cases where non-Malays ask for Malay rights to be abolished... this is about understanding. We cannot claim everything for ourselves,” he added.

Racial and religious tension has continued to mount since 2009, after the High Court ruled that the Catholic Church has a constitutional right to use the term “Allah” in the Bahasa Malaysia edition of its newspaper The Herald.

The ruling sparked a series of arson attacks on churches and other houses of worship.

A proposal to move a Hindu temple to a largely Malay area in Shah Alam also saw a protest in which the severed head of a cow was dragged openly through the streets of the Selangor capital. Cows are considered sacred in Hinduism.

Right wing groups such as Perkasa have claimed that Malays are currently under siege, and that the government needs to do more to defend their rights that they maintain are being eroded.

A recent survey by pollsters Merdeka Center found that Malaysians believe inter-racial relations have degenerated over the past five years due to distrust among the different races.

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