

**Dr M: Privilege for non-Malays to keep race image**  
**Malaysian Insider**  
**June 29, 2012**  
**By Shazwan Mustafa Kamal**

KUALA LUMPUR, June 29 — Non-Malays should consider themselves privileged as the government still allows them to retain their racial identities, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamed has said.

The former prime minister told online television station The Malaysian Observer (MobTV) that Malaysians were currently "more race conscious" than ever before, and that people were still segregated.

"Non-Malays are still privileged. Only in this country do people who still identify themselves in their country of origin... and are allowed to have their language, their culture, their school system," said Dr Mahathir.

"At the moment, people are still talking about themselves, their rights and their privileges, and not just about Bumiputeras.

"We find people are still segregated; we try to do something (about it), but there are objections," said the former PM.

Dr Mahathir said past efforts to unite the country's education system have been opposed by Chinese educationalists, and appeared to blame this on the federal opposition.

"Chinese educationalists have objected for their children to go near Malay children; this is the effect of opposition.

"If that is not racist, what is?" he asked.

Dr Mahathir has said that the general election to be held within a year will centre on race as Malaysia has become more racist than ever.

The influential former prime minister told a forum on business and politics that Barisan Nasional's (BN) weakness, after losing its customary two-thirds majority in Parliament in the March 2008 election, has forced the coalition to cater to various racial demands.

Dr Mahathir, who led the country for 22 years before retiring in 2003, said "the current government is inherited from the previous administration which didn't do so well. As a result, we have a weak government.

"The old leader was replaced with a new leader who is trying hard but it is not easy. He is being pressure from all sides. If he concedes to one group, other groups are unhappy. In the end the minority prevails," he said.

Datuk Seri Najib Razak took power in April 2009, a year after Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi led the ruling BN to its worst-ever electoral performance, ceding 82 federal seats and five state governments.

In March, Abdullah, Dr Mahathir's hand-picked successor, also said race will be the main issue for the 13th general election.

"We are always concerned about race. Because there is a tendency for certain parties to make use of these issues, as a way of getting support for them and creating problems for us," the Kepala Batas MP said in a video interview with Bloomberg.

However, he told the business wire "the lesson we can learn is, and some people may not agree, but the fact we didn't have two-thirds did not mean that we became weak."

Najib took over from Abdullah ostensibly to improve on BN's performance in the next general election.

Observers believe he will need an improvement on the 140 federal seats won and to regain some of the states lost to be assured of remaining in power.

Copyright © 2012 The Malaysian Insider

Source:

<http://www.themalaysianinsider.com/malaysia/article/dr-m-privilege-for-non-malays-to-keep-race-image/>