

Dr M: 'I'm no intellectual'
Malaysian Insider
August 26, 2012
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KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 26 — Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, the man often credited with placing Malaysia on the world map, has downplayed his past achievements, saying there was no need for a very intelligent person to run the country the way he had.

The country's longest-serving prime minister said he was no intellectual and his achievements during his 22-year tenure were neither mysterious nor complex, as they were born out of logic.

"I am always amused when people try to analyse my opinion and actions when I was prime minister.

"There really is no necessity to figure out the complexity of the thought process and the mystery of doing these simple things," Dr Mahathir wrote in his blog yesterday.

"I am not an intellectual but I admit that I use my brain more often than most."

The man, whose opinions continue to make headlines until today, pointed out that during his tertiary years, he had been the one with the lowest results in his Senior Cambridge Examination to be admitted to the King Edward VII College of Medicine in Singapore.

There were seven Malays, he recalled, whose results were all similarly inferior to those of the other students but had made it into the prestigious school to read medicine.

"Apparently the British were practising affirmative action in 1947. So much for being an intellectual," Dr Mahathir said.

The man, often dubbed the "father of modernisation", added that in his early years growing up in his home state of Kedah, it was obvious that the Malays there were much poorer than those from other ethnic backgrounds.

"It did not need a very intelligent person to notice that. They (Malays) clearly faced a dilemma whether to get something of the wealth of their country for themselves or to just remain as they were.

"Hence the book 'The Malay Dilemma'," Dr Mahathir said, referring to the controversial book he had published in 1970, just a year after the bloody racial riots of the May 13, 1969, tragedy had rocked the nation.

In "The Malay Dilemma", Dr Mahathir had dissected Malaysia's history and politics in terms of race, discussing his observations on the failures of the Malay race and the need for affirmative action.

"It also did not need an intellectual to learn from successful people. The Japanese and the Koreans succeeded in developing their countries after the destruction wrought by war.

"Obviously, if we want to develop Malaysia, we should learn from these successful people. Hence the 'Look East' policy," he explained, referring to an initiative launched during the early years of his career in 1981, which called on Malaysians to emulate the values, work ethics and technological skills in eastern countries like Japan, South Korea and Taiwan.

"And finally, if you want to go somewhere, you must determine the destination. We want our country to develop.

"The destination must obviously be the developed countries. The steps that have to be taken must be those which lead to the status of a developed country. Hence vision 2020," Dr Mahathir said.

The former prime minister pointed out that without the authority accorded to him as prime minister at the time, all such initiatives and programmes would have remained a pipe dream.

"Without that authority, one can dream. Many Malaysians may have dreamed but authority gave the opportunity to implement dreams," he said.

"If other PMs want to do what I did, they can. But if they have other agenda then they would attend to fulfilling their agenda.

"I am not a complex person. There is no mystery about what I did," he said.

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