

Dr M's reading of Malays 'obsolete', says Anwar
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By Clara Chooi

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 24 — Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's understanding of the Malay community is obsolete and irrelevant, Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said today, dismissing the former prime minister's suggestion that the country's majority race would lose dominance under a Pakatan Rakyat (PR) government.

"On the contrary, I believe the vast majority of the Malays will benefit more (under PR)," he told The Malaysian Insider when approached in Parliament today.

Dr Mahathir told Umno's Utusan Malaysia in an interview published yesterday that the Malays were "ungrateful" and "lacking intelligence", warning that the greed of a few power hungry Malays in the opposition would see the country's largest ethnic group lose its political power.

The former PM also alleged that "if any of these Malay (opposition) parties win the elections and form the government, this government would have to follow the dictates of other (races)."

"I think he represents the old, obsolete thinking of the Malay dilemma," Anwar said in laughing off Dr Mahathir's remarks. "It may be deemed as relevant at one particular time but today, we consider it obsolete."

The former Umno deputy president accused Dr Mahathir, his greatest arch-nemesis at one time, of being dishonest in his views, saying the latter true reason for wanting to unite the Malays under Barisan Nasional (BN) was to protect the business interests of his family members.

"But let me remind Dr Mahathir that when we speak of the Malays, we must speak of the millions of those who will be affected.

"He (Dr Mahathir) is only determined to protect his family business — Mokhzani's billion ringgit contract, Mirzan's billion ringgit business," Anwar said, rekindling the bitter rivalry between himself and his former superior in the government.

He disputed Dr Mahathir's claim that some Malays in the opposition have even resorted to "begging" for support from the non-Malays, vowing that all races in the country would be given sufficient attention under PR.

"I would say without apologies that we are here to accept the role of every single Malaysian, be they Malay, Chinese, Indian, Iban or Kadazan; we make no apologies for that," he said.

He added that affirmative action policies were needed but stressed that these must be tailored to benefit the vast majority of the poor and the marginalised, "irrespective of race".

Dr Mahathir's posturing, added Anwar, was merely a clear reflection of the ruling BN's brand of politics, which he labelled the "politics of fear".

"That is the only language they understand," he said.

Earlier today, former Cabinet member Datuk Zaid Ibrahim said he would rather be tarred as "ungrateful" instead of "stupid", as he mocked Dr Mahathir for suggesting that Malays who were unappreciative would cause the community to lose political power.

Responding on Twitter this morning, Zaid said: "I rather be called ungrateful Malay than a stupid one, who doesn't think, who follow blindly the dictates of arrogant Malay leaders."

Zaid was part of Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi's Cabinet and was sacked from Umno in 2008, a few months after he resigned as minister to protest against the government's decision to use the Internal Security Act (ISA) to arrest an opposition politician, a blogger and a journalist.

He became a PKR member before eventually quitting, and is now the leader of an opposition-aligned party, where he continues to push for political and law reforms.

Dr Mahathir has in recent months become a vocal campaigner for Datuk Seri Najib Razak's Umno, and his growing influence has seen the party shed many of its reform plans in favour of playing the race card.

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