

Dr M: Malay privileges will be phased out in future
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PUTRAJAYA: Former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad said affirmative action to secure Malay privileges would have to be phased out in the future.

He said while some elements of the affirmative action would still be given to the Malays, the "crutches" should be taken away once the Malays were ready.

"In the end, we have to accept that it is not a permanent privilege, nor is it a sign of Malay superiority. It is merely a temporary crutch to help the Malays move forward.

"The crutches would have to go, but only when we are certain that the Malays can compete in the market without them."

Dr Mahathir was speaking at a "Future of Affirmative Action" seminar and the launch of the Perdana Discourse Series book yesterday.

He said more help should still be given to the Malays but only to those who were capable. Those who had a good track record would be entrusted with more business choices that would help them to grow.

"Some people said this affirmative action has been abused and used to enrich the cronies of the government.

"But they would say that no matter who we give the contracts to.

"The truth is, the non-Malays are also given opportunities in business, and to say otherwise would be denying facts," he said.

The idea for affirmative action first arose after the 1969 riots, said Dr Mahathir, when the government realised that the reason for the uprising was because of the disparities between the races.

He said the people had continued to identify themselves with their country of origin, which fuelled the animosity.

"We decided that some affirmative action needed to be taken although it might discriminate against some races," he said.

The actions included opening the gates for more Malay students to enter universities and increasing their chances in business.

Although the Malays were given these special allocations, they still lacked the proper mindset to prosper, he said.

"They still see money as something that can be exchanged for goods, instead of capital that can make their wealth grow.

"There are a few who have made it, but the majority have yet to change their mindset. They have to realise that being hardworking and disciplined would not make them any less Malay."

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