

**Tanda Putera would be good for the nation, says Dr M
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By Syed Jaymal Zahiid**

KUALA LUMPUR, March 14 – Educating the public about the May 13th race riot through screenings of movies like Tanda Putera would be good for the nation, former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

“If we can we should educate the public about what had happened during May 13, it would be a good lesson if not the country would be unstable,” he told reporters after speaking at a forum in University Malaya here.

“If only one race controls a certain interests while another race doesn’t, there is anger and this is bad for the country,” added the former prime minister (picture), referring to the mainstream argument behind what sparked the bloody clashes – that the Malays were angered by Chinese control of the economy.

The film has raised the ire of opposition politicians who say some scenes are not historically accurate.

But the film’s director had stressed that the film is not a documentary, but a movie “with dramatic elements and creative licence responsibly exercised in its making” and with research done beforehand.

On Saturday, the movie was privately shown to a group of 600 students in an “invite-only” screening at Universiti Islam Antarabangsa Malaysia (UIA), in what the opposition had described as a brainwashing programme.

According to a student group, it was mandatory for Police Undergraduate Voluntary Corps and Air Force Reserve Officer Training Unit (PALAPES) members to attend, while UIA’s residential colleges have been asked to send six members each.

“Those who attend would also be awarded ‘Star Points’,” news portal Malaysiakini quoted We Unite for Islam UIA president Mohd Najib Abdul Rahim as saying, referring to the institution’s participatory merit point system.

The Malaysian Insider was turned away from attending the 9pm screening last night, which appeared to be tightly guarded by security personnel.

Last month, over 3,000 Felda settlers were shown a surprise preview of “Tanda Putera”.

The film was shown during a special gathering of settlers at the Putra World Trade Centre (PWTC), which was also attended by former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

The film had raised questions from members of the public, including Suaram adviser Dr Kua Kia Soong and prominent lawyer Datuk Ambiga Sreenevasan, with the latter questioning why it was only shown to Felda settlers.

"Tanda Putera" depicts the second Prime Minister Tun Abdul Razak Hussein and his deputy, Tun Dr Ismail Abdul Rahman, during the post-May 13 period. Razak's eldest son, Datuk Seri Najib Razak, is the current prime minister.

The film was produced by Pesona Pictures Sdn Bhd in collaboration with the National Film Development Corporation (Finas), which provided the financing together with the Multimedia Development Corporation (MDEC).

It was previously reported that Putrajaya had decided last October to put off the public release of the film indefinitely due to the controversial depiction of the events surrounding the 1969 racial riots.

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