

**You divided the Malays, Dr M told**

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PETALING JAYA: Two political analysts have disagreed with former prime minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad's claim that the Malay community became divided only after he left office as prime minister and Umno president in 2003.

Ilham Centre's Hisomuddin Bakar and Universiti Teknologi Malaysia's Mazlan Ali said the discord among the Malays had its roots in the internal conflicts which arose during Mahathir's lengthy tenure as the party's president.

Hisomuddin said Mahathir's decision in 1998 to sack Anwar Ibrahim as deputy prime minister and Umno deputy president split the party's strong Malay support base.

"As a result, PAS benefited by increasing its parliamentary seats, gaining 20 more seats compared to the previous general election," he told FMT.

PAS contested the 1999 general election as part of Barisan Alternatif, an opposition coalition which comprised Anwar's Parti Keadilan Nasional (PKN), DAP, and several other parties.

In total Barisan Alternatif won 42 seats, with PAS taking 27.

Hisomuddin also said Mahathir split the Malay community further by forming Bersatu, an Umno splinter party, and contesting in the 14th general election six years ago under the Pakatan Harapan banner.

He was responding after Mahathir, in a recent exclusive interview with FMT, claimed that the present-day disunity among Malays stemmed from the incompetence of his successors in office.

Meanwhile, Mazlan pointed to other crises which unfolded during Mahathir's tenure as prime minister and Umno president.

He said Musa Hitam's resignation as deputy prime minister and party deputy president in 1986 fractured the country's largest Malay party.

"In 1987, Umno also faced a crisis and was eventually banned, leading to the formation of Semangat 46," said Mazlan.

The tumultuous events in 1987 stemmed from a contentious party election which ended up in court and saw Umno declared illegal, prompting Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah, Musa and other prominent party members to form Semangat 46 in 1989.

Although a new party, Umno Baru was formed and Semangat 46 subsequently dissolved, the party split again in 1998 when Anwar was dismissed, Mazlan said.

“Everything happened during Mahathir’s time,” he said.

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