

'PM must have people's trust'

His race does not matter, says Dr M

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PUTRAJAYA: It does not matter if the Prime Minister is Malay or non-Malay, as long as he enjoys the trust of all Malaysians.

Former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad said there was no specification in the country that the Prime Minister should only come from among the Malays.

"But when you talk about having a non-Malay as a PM, you are being racist yourself because you shouldn't ask the question if one is Malay or non-Malay.

"If he is acceptable to all Malaysians, yes, he can become PM. The specification is that he must be the leader of the majority party.

"Don't ask if he is Malay, Chinese or Indian," he told reporters after delivering a keynote address on "Bangsa Malaysia" at the Perdana Leadership Foundation here yesterday.

However, Dr Mahathir said the assumption that race-based politics or political parties were no longer relevant after the last general election when Barisan Nasional lost five states was wrong.

"Race-based politics is still relevant. We are still not united if we can't even have a vision school for all children from various races to attend together. As long as there is such sentiment, we won't be able to have Bangsa Malaysia.

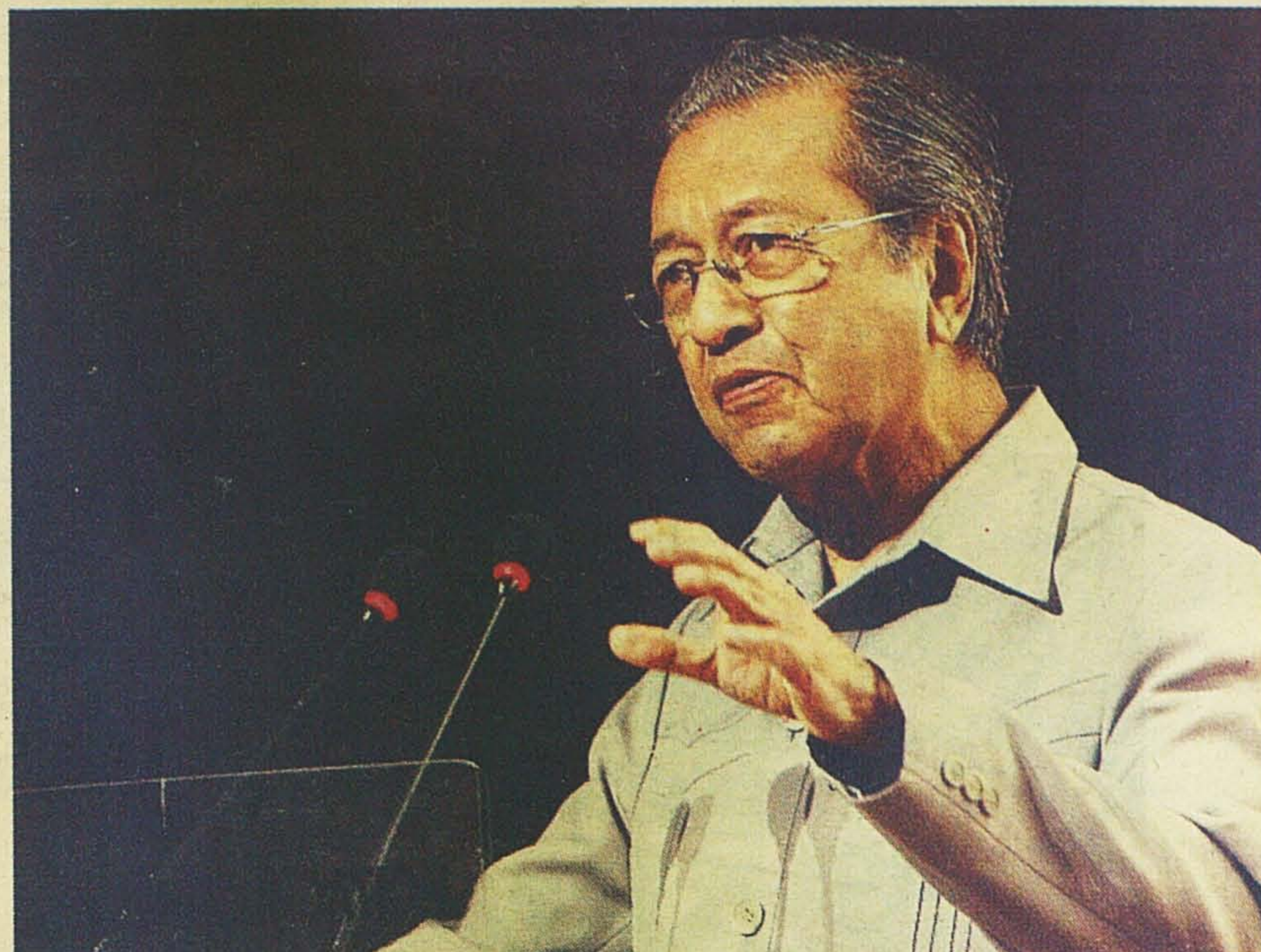
"A multi-racial party won't work because every multi-racial party is dominated by one race, like Gerakan

and DAP. Even the PAP in Singapore is not multi-racial," he said, adding that unless opposition parties like PAS or Keadilan were willing to have a non-Malay as their leader, such talk was merely propaganda.

Earlier in his address, Dr Mahathir said there would come a time when all races in the country would be able to come together as one "Bangsa Malaysia".

"But I don't think it will happen tomorrow and it will take a long time. We can keep our ethnic and cultural identities but we should feel more Malaysian than Malay or Chinese.

"The concept of Bangsa Malaysia cannot be forced on us and it cannot be done by a political party. This is because it's about people, not politics," he said.



Speaking his mind: Dr Mahathir delivering his keynote address at the Perdana Leadership Foundation in Putrajaya yesterday.

Mahathir raises questions over candidates

PUTRAJAYA: Former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad has raised questions over the credibility of candidates contesting the number two post in Umno, asking how a candidate with a "very bad history" qualified to contest at the last minute.

"There is a lot of hanky-panky. When you know someone with a

very bad history is still getting support there is a strong possibility that money politics is involved because, somehow, someone has come from very far behind to catch up.

"At first, in the initial weeks, some people succeeded in garnering enough nominations while others remained at the bottom.

"Then, suddenly, nominations for

these people shot up. Why?" he asked reporters after delivering a keynote address on "Bangsa Malaysia" at the Perdana Leadership Foundation yesterday.

There are currently three contenders in the deputy president's race - Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin is leading the pack with 91 nominations while Datuk Seri Mohd Ali Rustam has 47

and Tan Sri Muhammad Muhammad Taib has 46.

Muhyiddin was the first to qualify to contest the post and Dr Mahathir said he believed Muhyiddin was the best person for the job.

On money politics, Dr Mahathir said the only way to clamp down on the scourge in Umno was to investigate all the names listed in

the 900 complaints received and then have them removed from the party.

"They should be thrown in jail. That is a good way to use the Internal Security Act and not against someone writing some nonsense.

"Umno must be cleaned up. If not, they will lose in the next general election," he said.