

**KEYNOTE SPEECH BY TUN DR. MAHATHIR MOHAMAD AT
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Bismillahirrahmanirrahim, Assalamualaikum warahmatullahi wabarakatuh, and a very good morning to everyone.

Firstly, I would like to thank the Perdana Leadership Foundation as well as Universiti Teknologi MARA for inviting me to speak on this very important subject, 'Bangsa Malaysia'.

I have noticed that we have a full audience today and most of them of course are young people. This means that young people in Malaysia are interested in the future of their country. I imagine that they would want to do what is best for this country, and to do that I think, they must believe that attending a meeting such as this would be useful for them. I feel greatly honoured that there are so many people attending this event and I will try my best to 'confuse' you on this issue.

I have been interested in this subject for a very long time. If you care to read the 'Malay Dilemma', you will find that I have discussed about this a long time ago.

When I wrote the 'Malay Dilemma' in 1970, I was trying to find a model for Malaysia, that would enable us to bring the different races together as one nation, to make them feel that they belong to the nation, that this nation is distinct from other nations, and that they are the people of Malaysia. To show the representation of *Bangsa Malaysia*, I have looked for examples in other multiracial countries and I find none that is the same as Malaysia, in terms of its racial mix and its origin. The closest that I could find was Switzerland, and in my book, 'Malay Dilemma', I have also discussed at length about Switzerland. It is not exactly like Malaysia but it has a multi-racial population, although these races are ethnically the same in the sense that they are all Europeans.

Europeans are divided into not only different races but also different ethnic groupings. For example, there are Latin people who can be found around the shores of the Mediterranean. In the north, they have Germanic people who are quite distinctive from the people in the south. Then, of course, they have the eastern people, the Slavic.

These are the three major groups that can be found in Europe. These groups have further broken up into different countries and races. The Germanic people includes the British who are English, Scots and Welsh, the others, and Germans. The people of the Nordic countries have common ethnic backgrounds and they too belong to the Germanic group. In the south, the Mediterranean people are referred to as Latin. These are made up of Spanish, Italian, French and some other smaller groups. In the eastern part of Europe, the Slavic people are also divided up into Russian, Polish, Czechs, Yugoslav and the rest who originally came from central Asia and had migrated to the West and settled down in the eastern part of Europe.

They are different yet similar in the sense that the European culture is based on the Greek culture. This is common to them. Although they came from different ethnic groups, they tend to share the same basic culture. In terms of their skin colour, they are white or what is known as *Orang Putih*. There is not that much of a difference in terms of skin colour between the groups in Europe as there are, for example, between the Asian people who are very different culturally. Of course, there are certain Asian groups like the Mongolians, Chinese, Koreans and Japanese who are physically similar. We also have the South East Asians, the brown people, and of course, we have darker people in South Asia, in India.

In Europe, all three groups are represented in Switzerland. Switzerland has four separate ethnic groups. They include the people of Germanic origin, Latin who are more akin to the Italians, the French and Romanic people, a very small minority group. They speak four different languages in Switzerland, including French, which is the language around the western parts. In the southern part of Switzerland, they speak Italian. In the northern part, they speak German, and a scattering of Romanic people speak their own language, which is unique and is quite distinctive from the other three languages. We can say that these people are of different ethnic origins - the French, Germans and Italians.

The Swiss people speak the language of these countries. There are German and French-speaking groups and then, there is the Italian speaking group. So, they have three languages (if we ignore the Romanic language). However, they have long formed this country called Switzerland and they even live apart from each other. In the northern

part of Switzerland the people are mainly of German origin, the western part the French, and the southern part the Italians. Yet, they call themselves Swiss. They do not identify themselves as Italian Swiss or German Swiss or French Swiss. They regard Switzerland as their country and they are very nationalistic because Switzerland is a country defended by volunteers. Every Swiss adult must be able to handle a gun and train as a soldier. They actually keep their guns in the house so that if there is any attack against Switzerland, they will know exactly where to go to defend their country. They do not require that German Swiss should defend the German part and French Swiss should defend the French part. They are Swiss. How do they solve the language problem? How do they talk to each other? The Swiss are very good linguists. They are able to speak sometimes in as many as five languages. English is a very common language among the Swiss. Practically, every Swiss person can speak English. In addition, each person could speak at least two other languages. They can be French, Italian or German. When you have three languages and people have a command of two, there will always be a common language they can speak to each other with. If they are from the French group, they may speak French and Italian. The Italian group may speak Italian and German, and therefore, the French group can speak to the Italian group in Italian. The German, in addition to the German language would know enough French to be able to speak to each other in French. Therefore, there is no notion of a national language in Switzerland. Yet they are very much together and they are Bangsa Swiss. There is no doubt about their loyalty and their identification to Switzerland.

This is the situation in Switzerland. Then, we have other countries where the population is made up of various immigrant races like in the United States. This is a very interesting example, because Mr. Obama, a black man who must be in some way a descendant of slaves, has now become the President of the United States. Americans come from different countries in Europe and from Africa (of course we do not know exactly which particular part of Africa they come from because it is lost in history). Obviously, they must have come from many different tribes in Africa. However, once they are in America they lost contact with their tribes and carry no more the culture of their own tribes. They do not know any of the languages of Africa. After years of being in America they speak English. English is their mother tongue and it is the same with the European migrants including Jews who migrated to America.

In America, the migrant becomes naturalised American citizens and swear allegiance to America. Beyond that they all accept that as Americans, they have to accept English as their national language. They go to schools where teaching is done in English and they speak English at home. I do not know if anybody knows of Americans who do not speak English, but the Americans I have met speak English. English is the national language of America. This is despite the fact that the Anglo Saxons may not be the first to settle in America and found the country we now call the United States of America. Their numbers were not very big but they have inter-married with the descendants of English-speaking settlers from England, Ireland and Scotland. They constitute the original people of the United States and they gave their language, culture and identity to the United States. The United States has accepted English as the mother tongue and all migrants who come to the United States must learn and speak English. After the first or second generations, they would have forgotten their European languages. They may come from Germany, Italy or France, but they have become American citizens.

Perhaps the first generation Americans might be able to speak the language of their original country but after the first and second generations, they may not be able to speak their native tongues, although their names may indicate that they are from Germany, France or Italy. Frank Sinatra was an Italian, but he has not sung in Italian (I do not know if anybody has heard him singing in Italian. I do not think he ever did). He spoke American English. In my opinion, American English is not good English, just like Malaysian English, but we accept that they do speak a language that is based on English. That is their language at home, in school and in universities. They accept that as Americans, English is their national language. However, that is not the situation in Malaysia.

Although Americans come from many countries, they identify themselves as Americans who speak English as their national language, study and conduct research at their universities in English. In fact, everything is in English. They may be originally Kenyan like Obama and other blacks who were forcefully taken to America as slaves, but they have now become Americans, Black Americans (their colours could not be changed). Obama is not a pure black man nor does he have a big nose like mine. He is a person of mixed race but people still regard him as black. I had this incident in which I

said, 'I'm a coloured man' to an American. He said, 'No, no, no. You are not a coloured man', For them a coloured man is a black man. A brown man is not a coloured man. Of course, America has its own definition of words, which we have to accept when we talk with them.

However, Obama is still regarded as a coloured man, although they don't say 'Coloured' anymore because that term is derogatory. They don't even say 'Negro' as people get offended if you call them that. They are Blacks (although Black and Negro mean the same thing. Negra, a Spanish word means black. That's how the term Negro is derived). Therefore, Negro is Black. These blacks may come from many different parts of the African continent. However once they are in America, they shed their culture, forget their language and they become English-speaking Americans (American Blacks speak very peculiar English sometimes).

So that is the situation in America, although the people may come from different countries, they are identical in terms of language, culture and loyalty to their country. It is worthwhile pointing out that Eisenhower was a German of German descent, yet he led the American forces against the Germans. He fought hard against the Germans and he beat the Germans. Kennedy was Irish and I don't know whether they went to war with the Irish or not, but a lot of Irish people migrated because of the problem they had with their potato crops some hundred fifty or two hundred years ago. So, this mixture of people has been able to assimilate and adopt the original language and culture brought by the English-speaking people who were the first settlers in the thirty colonies. They do not dispute why the language should be either English or Spanish. There are many people of Spanish-origin who migrated to Mexico and California, a territory that once belonged to Mexico. Generous 'Uncle Sam' conquered California in order to develop it, but now it has been re-conquered by the Mexicans. So many Mexicans crossed the Grande River and settled down in California that they now decide the fate of California. So, they say we have taken back California for Mexico.

Somehow, they chose Schwarzenegger who is an Austrian as their Governor (you see how confused they are, maybe more confused than we are). That is the situation in America. I can cite a few other examples. Even Australia is becoming multi-racial. People of Asian origin are now allowed to migrate to Australia. You may not

remember it, but I lived during a time when Australia had a 'white- Australia' policy, and non-whites could not migrate to Australia. However, because they like Chinese cooking, they allowed a lot of Chinese to cook their food in Australia during the gold rush.

Otherwise, it was only for the whites and of course, their national language is English or some form of English (it is not really English but if I say it they might get offended). So the Australians accept English as their national language. If you're an Australian you speak English even if you are a Muslim. I was recently in Melbourne and I met many Muslims there. One of them founded a Muslim school in Brisbane. It accepts Muslims or people of other faiths as students. The teaching is conducted in the Australian-version of English. They do not teach in Urdu, Hindi or Tamil. This Muslim school receives quite a lot of funds from Malaysia and is doing well.

So, no matter how we try to find a situation like Malaysia, we cannot, as Malaysia is unique with a multi-racial population that is separated not just by ethnicity but by language, culture, religion and also by economic well-being. Therefore, we are very widely separated.

When Malaysia became independent in 1957, many people didn't think much about Malaysia. People thought that this country would not survive because of the vast differences between the races living in Malaysia. Even in terms of the colour of their skins, we have Malays and other Bumiputeras who are brown. We have Chinese who are of lighter skin (it's not quite right to say yellow) than the brown people, and we have people of Indian origin who are dark. Therefore, people predicted that we would not have a good future. They said that once the country becomes independent and democratic, the majority would oppress the minority. At the time when we became independent in 1957, the Malay majority was overwhelming. There were only about 250,000 Chinese citizens of Malaya in 1957 and over two million Malays. Obviously, the Malays could set up a Malay government and then oppress the Chinese and the Indians.

There were lots more Chinese and Indians of course, but they were not citizens and therefore were not eligible to vote. But then Tunku Abdul Rahman decided that we could not have this disparity. We should be fair even though the British were very scared of the Chinese and thought they would change this country into a communist state.

Tunku Abdul Rahman decided that he would give away one million citizenships without referring to the usual qualifications on the principle of '*Jus soli*'. It was not on the principle of being born to a Malaysian parent. Just on the basis of being born in Malaysia, you could become a citizen and he (Tunku) gave away one million citizenships, about 800,000 to Chinese and about 200,000 to Indians, maybe less. So the disparity in terms of voting power between Malays and Chinese were very much reduced.

In 1955, when the elections were held prior to our Independence, there were only 250,000 voters who were Chinese; some two million voters were Malays. Actually, the Malays could have fielded maybe ninety percent of the candidates from UMNO but instead, they formed an alliance and decided that Malays should give up some of their seats to the Chinese and Indians. UMNO also ensured that Malays would support Chinese and Indian candidates who contested in Malay constituencies. It was a big departure from the original purpose of setting up UMNO, which was to preserve the position of the Malays. Nevertheless, Malays under the leadership of Tunku Abdul Rahman had decided that they should give their constituencies to Chinese and Indian candidates and made sure that they won the election. They contested in 52 seats and the Alliance Party as we know won 51 seats.

Now the British were trying to be very clever. The total number of seats in the legislative council was 98, and 52 seats barely pass the halfway point. In other words, you can only form a majority government if you can win 49 seats. Moreover, since there were many parties contesting, Alliance being one of them, the others were IMP, Labour party and all that, the British assumed none of these parties could get a sufficient majority to make up more than half of the 98 seats that were available in the legislative council. As it turned out, the Malays voted for Chinese and Indian candidates. They ensured that the Chinese and Indian candidates won against Malay candidates from PAS or IMP, and made up a majority 51 seats, more than half of the seats available in the legislative council. So, as you can see, despite the fact that this is a heterogeneous country with so many different races, divided in so many ways, affected by historical events (like the communists' attempt to take over the country immediately after the Japanese lost), all that was forgotten by UMNO Malays for their desire to achieve

Independence. Even if they had to vote for Chinese and Indian candidates against Malay candidates, they were prepared to do so and they did.

Therefore, despite all the dire predictions by foreigners and other observers that this country would end up with racial clashes, this country had a very peaceful election in which the Malays willingly supported Chinese and Indian candidates because they believed that they should work together to achieve Independence for the country. That was the first surprise that people noticed about Malaysia. Despite the dire prediction that Malays would oppress Chinese and Indians and take over all the seats, they actually supported them; and following that, Tunku Abdul Rahman decided to give more than a million citizenships to Chinese and Indians who were not eligible to vote. By the 1959 election, the proportion of Chinese and Indian voters as compared to Malay voters was not as different as it was in 1955. There were about 60 percent Malays and Bumiputeras and 40 percent non-Malays. So from two million Malay voters against 250,000 Chinese voters, the number of Chinese and Indian voters increased because of the citizenships that were granted by Tunku Abdul Rahman.

So after that, Chinese and Indians had a much bigger say in the political outlook of this country. They formed opposition parties, for example the PAP (People's Action Party) of Singapore. When Singapore was in Malaysia, they thought they could make use of Malaysian Chinese plus the majority of Singaporeans who were Chinese to displace MCA. It was their belief that when they joined Malaysia, Kuan Yew (Lee Kuan Yew) would have the chance to displace MCA and PAP would be UMNO's partner in the Alliance. But as it turned out the PAP did not get the Chinese support. Only one PAP candidate won and he was not a Chinese. He was selected out of so many candidates who were put up by PAP and won. So the Alliance came in despite the fact that the Chinese in Malaysia could very well have voted for PAP but did not. Of course, PAP was talking about 'Malaysian Malaysia' and even that could not convince the Chinese in Malaysia to support Lee Kuan Yew's party.

So, the Alliance continued to win and in 1964, they did quite well although they lost Kelantan. This was the situation; you can see the evolution or the way things changed despite the fact that Malays make up the majority of voters in this country. Initially, Malays under the leadership of Tunku Abdul Rahman decided that they should

not have that big a majority. They therefore reduced the majority by giving more citizenship to Chinese and Indians. It should be remembered that this happened after 1955, and at the time of Independence the citizenship of the Chinese had still not increased that much. So we find that Malays, Chinese and Indians in Malaysia believe in living and working together as well as keeping the country stable. There was no racial conflict.

What happened in 1969 was unusual, but we have to accept that it happened because some people including this speaker felt that Malays were not getting their fair share in the economy of the country. Eventually, Tunku Abdul Rahman made his exit and we had the New Economic Policy (NEP), *et cetera*, in an attempt to reduce our differences. We cannot change Chinese into Malays. We cannot change their colours. We cannot change Indians (and Chinese) into Malays, although some of them marry a lot of Malays. We cannot change them from who they are and we cannot change their ethnicity, culture, language, *et cetera*. We can at least change the economic disparities between the races. This was what the NEP was about. It is because we believe that if we remove economic disparity there will be less fear on the part of the Malays towards Chinese dominance. The Chinese will not feel threatened if the Malays achieved economic parity with them. So that was our attempt to create greater unity among the different people of Malaysia. However, NEP did not work as we had expected. The Malays did not really work very hard towards achieving the target and instead of getting the 30 percent share, the disparity remained. Because of this disparity, we had to extend the NEP beyond 1990.

However, we have to admit that the disparity at least has been reduced, and as a consequence, the tension between the races was much lessened. During the 1997-1998 financial crisis for example, the indigenous people in Indonesia had blamed the Chinese for the recession, had attacked and killed Chinese and burned their shops. In Malaysia, it was very quiet. No accusation was made by Malays against the Chinese who also cooperated very well with the government. Because of the stability, we were able to devise a solution to combat the recession in the country. Had the country been in turmoil, we would have faced difficulties. So we can see that the NEP has achieved some measure of success in its objectives. It was not fully achieved, but at least it has reduced disparities between different races and accordingly had reduced tension, hatred

and envy towards each other. What we need to do is to increase or to reduce the disparity even further. I believe that if we can remove economic disparity and that if the Malays do not feel threatened by Chinese economic aggressiveness and success, then, I think we would be well on our way to creating a *Bangsa Malaysia*.

Now what would be a *Bangsa Malaysia*? I believe that we will not be like Switzerland or America. I don't think we would be successful in getting everybody to use *Bahasa Malaysia* as their home language. At home, they will still speak their own dialect or language, but at least they should all be able to speak the national language fluently. That is what they should do. They should feel that they are of the same race and people living in the same country, Malaysia, therefore they should be *Bangsa Malaysia*. To a certain extent, they do feel that. Whenever I go abroad, I meet many Malaysians and they come to me and say, 'we are Malaysians'. They don't tell me they are Chinese or Indian Malaysians; although it is obvious they are, and most certainly Malays do not say we are Malay Malaysians. They are all Malaysians when they are abroad.

However, when they come home they are not quite Malaysian. They are Chinese Malaysian and Indian Malaysian, and they go to different schools, et cetera. We have agreed that people can use their own language at home and in schools, although not in official correspondence. So we have a Malaysian government that supports non-National language groups. This is not found in any other country in the world - America, Australia, New Zealand, Thailand or anywhere else. It is only in Malaysia that the government (as part of the social contract) agrees that Chinese and Indians can use their languages in schools at a certain level, in the primary school. Beyond that, they should use *Bahasa Malaysia*, and if they still want to use their language, then they will not get government heads for their schools.

In Malaysia, we have three different streams of schools. Tamils might think their language is not prominent, because according to Hindraf (Hindu Rights Action Force Movement), Tamils are very poor people, they cannot build their own schools, and when we decided to build schools for them, they gladly accepted. We find that Chinese educationists, not the Chinese population, seem to feel that they should not get anywhere near Malay students because it will have a bad influence on them. To a certain extent, I would agree with them because if they get mixed up with Malay

students, they might become Chinese '*mat rempit*'. That is why we fail to get all the different races into one school that uses the National Language as the teaching medium. Since we could not do that, they want to go back to their own schools and to have teaching carried out in their own languages.

We thought that at least the students should get to know each other very early on in life. That was when we decided on *Sekolah Wawasan*. What is *Sekolah Wawasan*? Since the schools are all scattered around, separated and there was no opportunity for Chinese, Indian and Malay students to mix, we thought that if we put the schools in one campus (which the government will build), then they would get the opportunity to meet each other. We are not asking the private sector to build these campuses. The government will build schools in one campus to house Chinese, Tamil and Malay medium schools or National Language schools.

When they are in one campus, I think, it would be difficult for them to just walk away the moment they see people of other races. So we thought that they will meet each other and in order to amplify this, to make sure that they do meet each other, we suggested that the morning assembly should be held together. Pupils of the Chinese, Tamil and National schools should be addressed in the same hall so they would have a chance to meet each other. If they play games, the games should not be played between the Chinese, Tamil and National schools. Instead students should be divided into different groupings (in my school days, we called these groupings 'houses'. I belonged to the 'King' house). In sports meets, the different houses compete with each other. We do not want to see one team which is purely Chinese, another Indian and one team from the National school. We would like to see them mixed together so that we can have team A, B and C each represented by students from different schools. So team A would have Chinese, Indian and Malay students, and it would be the same for team B, C or whatever. That way, there will not be too much identification with race. They will cheer and support their own teams, which would be made up of students from the three races. This was the idea of *Sekolah Wawasan*. There are many other activities in which all could participate irrespective of which school they come from. For example, the scout movement could have students from Chinese, Tamil and the National schools grouped together.

At least, that way we think we can bring people of different races together. In addition, by bringing them together, they would very likely use a common language to communicate. The language I think would be Malay or *Bahasa Kebangsaan* because it is also taught in Tamil as well as Chinese schools. It will provide more opportunity for them to speak *Bahasa Kebangsaan*. They would remain Chinese, Indian and Malay children but they would have more things in common if we place the schools in one campus. They will still have their own headmasters, teachers and facilities in schools, and more importantly, they will have opportunities to meet each other. This is important because when they leave schools these children will enter a society where there will be no distinction (between the races).

The reality is, there is not that much of a distinction when compared with schools where Chinese boys mingle with other Chinese boys and Malay boys are with their Malay groups, and it is the same with Indian boys. However, when these people go out to work, they will find that in all the institutions they work, there will be Chinese, Malay and Indian workers. They would have problems on how to behave and communicate with their co-workers. So, if they begin early by going to *Sekolah Wawasan*, then it will be an opportunity to bring them together and hopefully they will become much closer to each other, and through that they can be identified as *Bangsa Malaysia*. We are not going to abolish their races. They can retain their Chinese, Indian and Malay cultures. But they will get to know each other well enough to feel that they are the people of this country. People who have gone to these campus schools can be identified as Malaysians and not as Chinese or Indians.

Of course, there are other things that we need to do, for example, we thought that we could remove references of race and religion from IC cards. However, I don't know why people are so very panicky about this. They want to be noted not only as Malaysian, but also as Malay, Chinese or Indian, which I think, is unnecessary. Although, we often mistake Chinese for Malays because of their features or Indians for Malays and likewise (normally we would know whether they are Malays or Chinese or Indian), there's actually no need to put this information into their IC (identity card). If you remove that, I think ethnic separation can be reduced. There are a few other things that we need to do in order to reduce the identification of race with economic functions.

Schooling and acquisition of knowledge I think can contribute towards creating a *Bangsa Malaysia*. I must admit that the concept of *Sekolah Wawasan* did not receive good support especially from Chinese educationists (these people do not want to have anything to do with the Malays). I feel very sad. We live in the same country, work and play together. So what is wrong with our children meeting in schools? I went to an English school during my time and my classmates were Malays, Chinese and Indians, and I got along fine with them. I sometimes quarrelled with them but not because of race. So we got used to living together.

I went to a university in Singapore in 1947 where I was a minority. Among the medical students (out of 77 students, only 7 were Malays and that included me and my wife. It was fortunate for us because in those days you do not know too many girls around). Therefore, I know how it feels being in a minority (as the Chinese and Indians do in Malaysia). I felt very uncomfortable but I have to live with the environment and I got along well with my classmates and university colleagues. The class of 1947 was a unique group and to this day, we hold our reunion almost every year. The first reunion was held 25 years after our university days. That was in 1962. There were many of us and we were so glad to meet each other again and to be back together. There was a sense of camaraderie or of belonging to this group. To this day, this group still meets every year. We first thought that we should meet every 5 years. We decided on meeting every 3 years when we discovered that our number keeps reducing. It is now down to a year and although every year there continues to be absentees we still keep up this friendship.

Not only do we as alumni members get together, so too do our children and grandchildren. We could get along fine despite our races. I may have been a minority in the university but I didn't feel that they were my enemies or anything like that. I also get along fine with them despite their religion - Buddhist, Hindus, Christians. This did not come between us. We can live and stay together. Although many are Malaysians, most have migrated to Singapore. Well, it's a loss to Malaysia.

I think we should make an effort to have students come together. I hope parents will not listen to extremist groups who do not want us to be together at all. As Malays, we also have our problems. We always want to make sure that we are different. It's alright to

dress differently and all that, but we should get together and mix with each other and have common activities together. We can build a united nation. I don't think it's going to happen tomorrow. It's going to take place gradually over a long period of time. However, they can if they want to be identified with their own race, remain Chinese or Indians.

There would be more Malaysians than Chinese and Indians as Malays too would be more Malaysian than just being themselves. So, once we are able to reduce disparities of economic well-being and bring people together, then we may be able to have a Bangsa Malaysia. We cannot hurry and force this thing. It's not going to happen by some political party merely saying that this must be done. That is not going to happen because this is about people and not about politics alone. This is about people's desire to mix with other people.

Having said all that, we can still be proud that in Malaysia there are three races who are actually managing to live together in peace. This is a great success story, which we do not publicize. If you look at other countries with a multi-racial population, they can never get along together. They fight and kill each other and can never get together in any kind of situation. Here in Malaysia, we feel safe. We can go anywhere. Even during the 1969 racial riots, Chinese workers who were working in the villages in the rural areas did not harbour any fear of being attacked by the Malays. By the same token, the Malays could also go to towns, where the people were mostly Chinese, and not fear attacks. What had actually happened was confined only in Kuala Lumpur and not to other parts of the country. In other countries, when they have the same situation it tends to flare up and affect the whole country. But it didn't happen in Malaysia. So to that extent, we have already succeeded in creating a *Bangsa Malaysia*. But of course politicians were not happy. They would like to raise this issue every now and again because they would get a lot of support from people over these issues.

In the 2008 election that was held recently, the BN (Barisan Nasional), a race-based party, did not do well and they did not get the two-thirds majority they required and lost 5 different states and a federal territory to opposition parties. Why didn't BN do well? Some, particularly foreign observers said that the people of Malaysia are sick of race politics. They want to have a more liberal society and do not want to be identified by race, et cetera. Proponents of this argument were lauded by these foreign observers.

They say Malaysia has now changed. The people have rejected racial politics. They have accepted that they should not be identified by race. Therefore, they should belong to parties that are not race-based like KEADILAN (Party Keadilan Rakyat). However, I find it difficult to say that DAP (a component of KeAdilan) is not race-based. I cannot say the same for PAS (Parti Islam Se Malaysia). If you say PAS is not race-based then I am not Mahathir bin Mohamad.

If observers say that the rejection of BN was because of people's rejection of race-based parties, how then do they explain that the people and the party they support were also race-based? PAS is race-based. And DAP as we know is race-based and not really a multi-racial party. Although they have some window dressing, decorations and things like that to make it look nice, the parties are basically race-based. KEADILAN of course, is all things to all people. KEADILAN can be Islamic; it is also a supporter of Hindraf and of Chinese educationists. It is everything because some people say that they are 'people with many faces', each face for the people who like that appearance.

So we have this man (Anwar Ibrahim) who is popular worldwide. My opinion on Obama was not printed but his opinion is, because he is the future Prime Minister, so we should heed his opinion. Even then, who is going to replace him because he's not going to last forever. After him, who is going to take his position? If he says it's a Malay man, then you are being racial. If you say that it could be anybody else, then, you will not get the support of the Malays. So, to say that the results of the 2008 election show that people have rejected race-based parties and politics is quite wrong. This is shown very clearly because since that election, people talk about race much more than they ever talked about it before.

The conflict is always about race. What don't they like about the social contract? It is because of race. Why do they want a Deputy Prime Minister who is Chinese? It is because of race. Now, since Obama has become President of America, we need to have a Prime Minister who is a non-Malay. Why non-Malay? Saying non-Malay means you are being racist because you are thinking about race. Does it matter whether he is Malay or not? That is what you should be saying. So race has become a central issue after the election. Far from showing a rejection of racial issues, the election has stimulated racial debates and this is what is happening in the country.

Unless we are prepared to make sacrifices, I don't think we can ever achieve this (*Bangsa Malaysia*). Well, that is not quite right actually, because I just now said that over time we might become more Malaysian than our own ethnicities. We should hasten the process by restoring stability of this country and that can be done but not through voting for the posturing opposition parties. Unfortunately, we still have to go back to the race-based parties because they have lasted for the past 50 years, and have hopefully reduced the debates on race.

We have stabilised and developed this country to the level that we are today. By comparison, most other race-based developing countries have not been able to do so. There have always been serious conflicts and violence among them. Malaysia is a haven of peace and stability despite the fact that the people are so very different from each other. We are divided, yet we have found a formula where all races can work together politically and in other fields as well. So, if we want to dismantle this, let's do it slowly and not try to do all at one go by saying that we now reject race-based politics.

I think race-based parties are still relevant whether we like it or not. Thank you very much.