

Dr Mahathir tells Tunku not to lower himself

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By K. Vijayan

(IPOH, Mon. — Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad tonight advised former Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman not to lower himself in the eyes of the people.

He said he personally wanted to respect and look up to the Tunku as the Father of Independence.

"He doesn't like me and this is obvious. But this doesn't prevent me from looking up to someone who is older than me," he told a Press conference at the Menteri Besar's residence after meeting Perak Umno Youth members.

"To a certain extent we contributed to the Tunku's success in Kedah. We have supported him previously, so the least he can do now is to support us."

Asked about the Tunku's denial of a statement made to a Singapore newspaper which quoted him as saying that the Malays did not know how to do business, Dr Mahathir said he

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had not heard about the denial.

"I don't know about this but we do know this has been the Tunku's stand from before.

"We want to forget it but he keeps on reminding us."

When a reporter remarked that the Tunku was getting old, the Prime Minister said: "It is better for him not to lower himself to this level. We want to continue to look up to him."

"It is difficult to look up to a person who has lowered himself."

Asked whether he thought the Tunku's feelings were parallel to that of Semangat 46, Dr Mahathir said: "Maybe a little. The Tunku is Semangat 46's adviser.

"In that case, the Tunku can tell Semangat 46 members not to get involved in business. We also won't need the New Economic Policy anymore."

Dr Mahathir said he was disappointed with the Tunku's reported remarks about the ability of the Malays.

"We don't want to hear about things that we didn't agree upon with him before. It was such matters that resulted in Umno losing faith in the Tunku after 1969.

"We want to forget but I'm very sad as the Tunku likes to remind us of such matters. By right he should forget them and we will

continue to respect and remember him as Bapa Malaysia and Bapa Kemerdekaan."

Dr Mahathir said the Tunku's reported statement was not based on facts.

"It is true previously Malays only wanted to enter the civil service and the Chinese into business. But with proper training we have proven that Malays can also succeed in business like Azman Hashim (Arab Malaysian Bank) and Shamsuddin Kadir (of Sapura Holdings).

"The Government is giving the Malays opportunities and training to make them successful businessmen. The Tunku should instead be asking that Malays be given more training and help."

On the MIC, Dr Mahathir said he did not intend to intervene in the quarrel between MIC president Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu and his deputy Datuk S. Subramaniam.