

Dr M: No need for acting PM

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DATUK Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said there was no need to appoint an acting Prime Minister whenever he was away on official duty or leave because leaders of component Barisan Nasional parties have full trust and confidence in each other.

The Prime Minister said the Barisan Nasional was unlike the DAP and Pas whose leaders did not trust each other although they now wanted to co-operate for selfish political gains.

In reply to Opposition leader Mr Lim Kit Siang (DAP-Tanjong), Dr Mahathir said whenever he was away, the Deputy Prime Minister performed the duties of the Prime Minister.

"If I appoint an acting Prime Minister, we will look odd because, then, there will be two Prime Ministers — one abroad in his capacity as Prime Minister and one in Malaysia also in the same capacity," he said.

Mr Lim had asked Dr Mahathir to state whether it has become his new policy not to appoint an acting Prime Minister whenever he was overseas on leave or attending official functions.

Mr Lim also wanted to know the reasons why an acting Prime Minister was not appointed since the 1986 general election.

Documents

Dr Mahathir said the leaders of all component parties accepted the current procedure where the Deputy Prime Minister carried out the functions and duties of the Prime Minister whenever the latter went on leave or was on official duty abroad.

"There is no need for an acting Prime Minister."

To a supplementary question

by Mr Lim who pointed out that prior to the 1986 general election, the then Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Musa Hitam was always appointed acting Prime Minister in the absence of the Prime Minister, Dr Mahathir said he decided that the current procedure was most apt.

"It is in line with the practice of appointing another Cabinet Minister to perform the duties and responsibilities of any Minister who goes on leave or is on official duty overseas.

"The Minister acting for another Minister only has statutory responsibilities such as signing documents or attending functions which his colleague had been scheduled to perform."

He said that in the Barisan Nasional Government, there was complete trust and confidence among the component parties unlike that in the proposed opposition coalition front.