

‘I’ll go when the time comes’

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Dr Mahathir says he does not want to be Prime Minister for life

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KUALA LUMPUR, Wed. Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today he has no intention of staying on as Prime Minister “for life”.

He said he needed time to rest and *bunt amal ibadat sikit* (to deepen one’s religious and spiritual pursuits and be closer to God).

“The world will not end if I am not Prime Minister,” he said during a dialogue after the launch of a Workers’ Day rally for public sector workers at the National Institute of Public Administration.

“I hope no one will hold on to the belief that I will remain as Prime Minister for as long as I live.

“While I appreciate the confidence the people have in me, when the time comes, I will have to go.

“Give me a chance to relax and do the things I want to do.”

Although a new person would eventually be at the helm of the country, Dr Mahathir said life would go on.

“When I became Deputy Prime Minister, there were people who said *apa nakjadi ni* (what’s going to happen), but life went on.”

Dr Mahathir was responding to a call from the floor for him to continue as Prime Minister for as long as he lives as the country needed his leadership.

He fielded several other questions ranging from those on incest, the gold dinar and digital divide, to the importance of the English lan-

guage.

Asked to consider placing a female representative from Cuepacs at the Women and Family Development Ministry to monitor cases of incest, Dr Mahathir said it could be done but emphasised that a more effective way to curb incest was through religious education.

He said incest occurred because of a degeneration of moral values.

"It will not occur if our children are taught what is right and what is wrong from an early age.

"Religious teachers should also inculcate values in children as with

proper religious education, incest will not be rife, especially among Muslims.

"If religious teachers in schools do not concentrate only on spreading their political beliefs, I am confident we can curb this problem."

Incest, he added, had nothing to do with whether a family was rich or poor.

The Prime Minister said he had suggested sex education but some parties viewed the move "from only one angle".

"But it is actually related to moral values. If we do not have values,

then heinous acts like homosexuality and incest will occur. We are ashamed as it happens predominantly among the Muslims."

On English, Dr Mahathir said placing importance on the language did not mean one was less a nationalist.

"I am a nationalist but at the same time, I do not neglect English as it is considered the language of knowledge.

"A nationalist wants his race to be developed in all fields. If we



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master only Bahasa Melayu, we will not develop. In fact, we have to master other languages, especially English, in order to promote Bahasa Melayu."

This, Dr Mahathir said, was why workers had to master English.

"Schools are being provided computers and teachers will act as facilitators under a new education concept.

"We hope this will enable students to master the language.

"We also have language laboratories for teachers to upgrade their language skills."

The Prime Minister also stressed the need for workers to master in-

formation and communication technology as knowledge could not be divorced from it.

"At present, the country is divided into those who are computer-literate and those who are not. This is the digital divide and we have to bridge it."

The matter, he added, was recently discussed by the National IT Council.

To another question, Dr Mahathir said the job vacancies available in the country far outnumbered the number of unemployed.

"This is because our people are not willing to take up certain jobs. Some are unwilling to move to the place where there are vacancies."

He advised the people not to be

too choosy, and to take up whatever was available first. He also urged employers to give precedence to the hiring of locals.

Responding to another question, Dr Mahathir said the Government's relationship with Cuepacs now was better compared with before.

"We are willing to sit down and discuss problems intelligently, without adopting an attitude that my views are right while yours are wrong.

"If there is an ability on both sides to acknowledge that mistakes can sometimes be made and to forgive, then a lot of problems will be resolved. On our part, we will try to settle whatever problems to the best of our abilities."