

We had bad experience with nukes before, says Dr M
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Former prime minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad revealed his administration did not pursue nuclear power because of a "bad experience" with the technology.

"The cabinet then only supports the use of four methods to gain energy, namely fuel, coal, gas and hydro (electricity).

"The cabinet was not supportive of the nuclear energy option as there was a concern over how we would dispose of the waste. Furthermore, we have had a bad experience with it," he said.

The former premier however did not elaborate on what the "bad experience" was.

It is unclear whether Mahathir was referring to the 1MW mini-reactor in Bangi, which was commissioned in 1982, and operated by Malaysian Institute for Nuclear Technology Research, now called the Malaysia Nuclear Agency.

Speaking to reporters after function at Cyberjaya today, Mahathir said Malaysia still needs to do more research about fusion technology if it intends to build nuclear power plants.

Asked if he would advise the Malaysian government over its nuclear ambitions in light of a possible nuclear disaster in Japan, Mahathir retorted that he was not the government advisor.

"Furthermore, you all did not elect me long enough," he quipped.

1981 visit to Singapore

Mahathir was also asked clarify his claim in his recently released memoirs that he was once given a cold shoulder by Singapore during his first visit to the city state as premier in 1981.

A reporter told Mahathir that he had wrongly stated that Benjamin Sheares and not Devan Nair as Singapore's president.

However, Mahathir defended the factual accuracy of his book, adding that his wife Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali was his witness.

"I remember well as President Benjamin was also one of my teachers. Siti Hasmah is also there and you can ask her also," he insisted.

Siti Hasmah was seated at the back row during the press conference.

In his 800-page memoirs, Mahathir wrote that he felt slighted during the 1981 visit as he was greeted only by a protocol officer at the Singaporean Prime Minister's Office and was put in a holding room.

"I was made to wait for about 15 minutes and felt very sorely used. This was not the proper way to greet a foreign visitor of equal rank," he said.

He said that when then Singapore Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew and his successor Goh Chok Thong visited Kuala Lumpur, they were given the same treatment, while other heads of government were given a ceremonial welcome at Parliament House.

Mahathir also said that there was no state dinner during that particular visit to Singapore and that when he paid a courtesy call on Sheares, who was is professor in medical college, they spoke for 20 minutes before the latter's aide said the president had another appointment.

"I took the hint, got up and left," wrote Mahathir.

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