

Better for Najib to call polls 'later', says Dr M
Malaysiakini.com
September 16,2011

Former prime minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad suggested that it would be better for Prime Minister Najib Razak to wait before going to the polls.

When asked on the appropriate time for the election, Mahathir said: "Later will be alright. This will give time to Najib to make as assessment on who should be the candidates."

At an interview on RTM1 programme 'Bicara Negarawan bersama Tun Dr Mahathir', the former premier also touched on the importance of fielding winnable candidates in the next general election.

However he cautioned that the selected candidates, which will depend on the evaluation and opinion of Najib and his advisors, may go against the wishes of the party and create problems of sabotaging candidates in the election.

Mahathir was quizzed by a three-member panel in the programme which comprised Bernama editor-in-chief Yong Soo Heong, Utusan Group assistant chief editor I Zaini Hassan and Universiti Malaysia Sarawak lecturer Dr Jeniri Amir.

Najib will decide on the timing of the polls which must be held before 2013.

Some political observers believe that the PM could call an election as early as November this year, while others argue it is more likely next year.

Mahathir also said that government should not use the Internal Security Act, which allows for detention without trial, to muzzle political dissidents.

According to him, with the advent of the Internet, the government would need to win the hearts and minds of the people with "logical arguments".

He was also shocked by the blatant censorship of international magazine The Economist, where parts of an article on the controversial July 9 Bersih rally were blotted out.

According to Mahathir, such censorship is no longer effective as Malaysians can read the article on the Internet.

While he agreed that history should be rewritten to give credit to the heroes who fought for independence, Mahathir said that it should not be done at the expense of Umno's role in the struggle for freedom.

All races must make compromises

Mahathir also said the various races in the country must accept the fact that all their claims cannot be fulfilled by the government.

He said that if all the races could accept this fact, then this country would continue to remain peaceful, thus enabling a rapid economic development.

He said if any ethnic race wanted its demand to be fulfilled then it would indirectly deny the other races their rights, thus creating unhealthy competition between them.

"I feel administering a multi-racial country is different from that of a homogeneous country because there will certainly be demands made by the various races.

"In order to ensure peace in Malaysia, each race must accept the fact that not all 100 percent of their demands can be entertained. If they insist on getting all their demands met, then this will deny the other races of their rights,"

He said this when responding to a question on the openness introduced by the government after the 2004 general election which resulted in several groups openly demanding equal rights.

According to Mahathir, Malaysia was one of the nations that had granted freedom to all races in the country to use their own languages besides the national language in schools.

He said the freedom was given in order to respect the wishes of certain groups to continue using their own language in schools.

BN component parties need to do more

When asked on the BN component parties that were currently less active, Mahathir said they should get down on the ground and try to get closer to the grassroots by resolving the problems faced by the people.

In addition he said, the people must also realise that after 50 years of independence the cooperative spirit of component parties had created the best environment enjoyed by the people currently.

"We must remember that the coalition government had cooperated for 50 years and that this government had brought success to Malaysia, more so than the other governments.

"Thus we shouldn't reject the system that had brought success to us compared to one that is unfamiliar to us," he said.

Mahathir warned that the country could face a bleak future if the people vote for wrong people in government.