

Dr M confident Arab Spring won't reach M'sia
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Former premier Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the Middle East style revolts in recent months was unlikely to spread to Malaysia.

Speaking to reporters today, Mahathir said this was because the government under the leadership of Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak has been working hard in responding to the people's demands.

"If the government doesn't pay attention to the problems of the people, then the people will revolt.

"But Malaysia, since independence, have worked hard to create opportunities for the people... I don't see how the Arab Spring can infect us," he told a press conference after speaking at a forum in Kuala Lumpur today.

Earlier at the same forum, Najib said Umno must embrace reform or face the same fate as authoritarian regimes in the Middle East who were being toppled by the so-called Arab Spring revolt.

Commenting on the prime minister's performance, Mahathir said Najib is trying very hard but is facing an uphill task compared to his 22 years as premier.

"He doesn't have the majority that I have, (I had) the majority to handle a lot of opposition, he has a smaller majority so he has the hard part."

Gov't moving swiftly

While warning that corruption would be an obstacle to the government's transformation programme, he appeared satisfied with Najib's transformation progress.

"If it is successful - 100 percent - is another question, but corruption is not easy to curb, there is corruption everywhere.

"If it is corruption under the table, then it is easier to curb, but if corruption is above the table and has become a culture, then it will be difficult."

However, Mahathir insisted that Malaysia has not yet reached such a dire stage.

Praising the government for its speedy pledge to amend the Peaceful Assembly Bill 2011, he said it was up to the people to interpret whether the government was "giving in" or is being "sensitive" to the people's needs.

"I think the government is listening to the people and acting very quickly, in my time, I don't respond at all," he quipped.

Four days after the Bill was tabled in Parliament, Cabinet decided to amend several provisions, but still ruled that street demonstrations should not be allowed.

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