

'Dr M hard-headed and full of contradictions'

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Regarded as "Mr Clean", he was Dr Mahathir Mohamad's handpicked successor. But then the relationship turned sour. This was blamed on Abdullah Ahmad Badawi's ambitious son-in-law and his band of advisers, known then as the "fourth-floor boys".

abdullah ahmad badawi 020209 03Fearful that his legacy was being undermined, a bitter Mahathir then embarked on the warpath, firing a battery of criticisms against Abdullah, whom he deemed as an incompetent leader.

And in the aftermath of the 2008 general election, which witnessed the once impregnable BN fortress crack, Mahathir was determined to bring the curtain down on Abdullah's political career.

In an interview contained in a new book, "Awakening, the Abdullah Badawi Years in Malaysia", the former premier launched a vitriolic salvo at his predecessor, describing the octogenarian as a man of contradictions.

Among others, Abdullah also said if he had followed Mahathir's will with regard to the latter's pet projects such as the RM14.5 billion double tracking railway project, the nation would have gone bankrupt.

"Can you imagine if I had succumbed to Mahathir's continued pressure to spend when the deficit was already so high, how would Malaysia have weathered the oil and financial crisis which subsequently came up in 2008.

"If we had not been prudent then, and continued to spend, I can tell you we would be bankrupt by now," he said in an interview, which was published in the book that is slated to be launched later this month.

"I didn't like what Mahathir did. I gave Mahathir the opportunity to give me his views. I went to see him but he chose to be public in his attacks against me and my administration," he added.

Abdullah said he tried to explain about the critical deficit but Mahathir insisted that Malaysia should continue its spending then.

He attributed the continuous rocky relationship with Mahathir to the latter's

hardheadedness.

"Mahathir is set in his ways. And he believes that his way is the only way. When I tried to do things differently, he believed that I was doing things wrongly. But that is Mahathir.

"...The rest are all examples of what is the core issue - Mahathir's inability to accept any other views except his own," he said.

Mahathir blamed for BN's electoral debacle

Elaborating on his predecessor, who was prime minister for 22 years, Abdullah called Mahathir a man of contradictions.

NONE"Mahathir is a man of many contradictions. When we did well in 2004, he said such a strong mandate was not good for the country.

"When we did not do well in 2008, he heaped all the blame on me. He is doing it even today. (But) let him (say what he wants)," said Abdullah, who is fondly known as Pak Lah.

Despite Mahathir's blame, Abdullah said his predecessor cannot absolve himself from BN's worst showing in history.

"Mahathir cannot deny that he contributed to the erosion of BN's support in the 2008 general election through his open and unwarranted criticism and attacks.

"Calling my administration, which included a majority of people from his own Cabinet, as a 'half-past six government' and accusing us of corruption and all kind of things," he said.

Abdullah added he would never do the same to his successor Najib Abdul Razak.

The book is a collection of articles about Abdullah's era, published by Strategic Information and Research Development Centre and edited by Bridget Welsh and James Chin.

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