

Dr M schools Najib on what makes strong leader
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Taking a shot at Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak's comparison between Brazil's devastating defeat in the World Cup semifinals and the need for strong leadership, Dr Mahathir Mohamad offered some pointers.

The former premier said a strong leader would reject the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement (TPPA).

"I think it is Najib himself who said we need strong leaders. What is the qualification of a strong leader?"

"It is the ability and willingness to stand up against foreign pressure and protect the interest of this country.

"If you don't do that then you cannot be considered a strong leader," he told a press conference in Shah Alam.

Mahathir was speaking to reporters after launching a book entitled 'TPPA: Malaysia is not for sale' by the Malay Economic Action Council (Mtem).

Asked if he thought Najib was a strong leader, Mahathir, who celebrated his 89th birthday yesterday, replied: "I don't know."

"Because it all depends on the test or challenges he faces and how he handles it," he said.

Asked if Najib's stance last Friday that Putrajaya intends to go ahead with the TPPA but on Malaysia's terms was assurance enough, Mahathir insisted the agreement should be scrapped altogether.

"In the first place, why is it (TPPA) done in secret if it is not to cheat people?"

"I think the mark of a good leader is the ability to reject what is not good for this country," he said.

Earlier in his speech, Mahathir repeatedly made references to Najib's statement on the need of strong leaders in making his case against the TPPA.

He added that the country had been able to develop well even without free trade agreements in the past.

Mahathir was also asked about Pakatan Rakyat's leadership in Selangor but he appeared to have mis-heard the question and instead commented on BN's leadership in the state.

"I'm sorry to say, we should have done better in the last election but we did worse in 2008.

"There is a lack of leadership there or the system we used was all wrong and we should not continue to do wrong things," he said.

Abide by the constitution

On another matter, Mahathir said the country should abide by the constitution which provides for a constitutional monarchy and parliamentary democracy.

"If you break that, people will break other parts of the constitution then there will be chaos," he added.

He was asked to respond to readers' comments in his latest blog posting which raised concerns about the Johor royal family's involvement in the Iskandar region.

In the blog posting, Mahathir had weighed into the rapid development in southern Johor but expressed concern that it might become a region of foreigners like Singapore.

Asked what he thought about the comments to his posting on the royalty's involvement in business, he replied: "If people feel we are a free country, we are very liberal, people can speak their mind, no more ISA so people can say what they like.