

KJ refuses to be drawn into Dr M-Najib spat
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Youth and Sports Minister Khairy Jamaluddin has refused to weigh into former prime minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad's attacks against the government, stating he was the elder statesman's "public enemy number one" and did not want to cause any misunderstanding.

"About the comments or criticism by Mahathir against our prime minister, I take the stance that is better for me not to comment as I do not want Mahathir to misunderstand.

"Because from before, I have been public enemy number one for Mahathir," Khairy (left) said during a question-and-answer session at a BN Youth Volunteers function at Empire Damansara last night.

Khairy added that he did not want to take sides, adding that Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak was already well aware of Umno Youth and his support.

However, he said, the government must respond to policy criticisms from Mahathir, especially since he was prime minister for 23 years.

"Whatever differences I have with him (Mahathir), he was prime minister for 23 years so sure he has his own views... when he speaks, it's okay, we take it, we accept it.

"But what is important is we assess what he said, whether it can be accepted or not and whether it can be done," he said.

Khairy added that Mahathir was speaking from his own time and but the government must defend the changes for the current times.

"Whatever Mahathir says from his time, that's okay, but we must answer for our time," he said.

An example, Khairy said he disagreed with calls to reintroduce the Internal Security Act (ISA) which provides for detention without trial, saying that it went against natural justice.

'Defending change'

"This is the renewal that we must defend," he said.

Furthermore, he said Mahathir's criticism that the economy was not doing well also appeared to be contradicted by statistics released by Bank Negara, showing that the country's economy grew by 6.3 percent.

"Bank Negara's announcement showed the country's economy is doing well, the best in South East Asia in the first half of this year," he said.

Likewise, he said the government believes the BR1M cash handout was the best way forward for the targeted subsidy distribution despite Mahathir's reservations.

Khairy said this were the general policies responses that he expected the relevant ministers would address in response to Mahathir.

He also dismissed any rift within Umno following the former premier's criticism, saying that they were just issues to be addressed.

Khairy who is the son-in-law of Mahathir's predecessor Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, had become a target of the country's longest serving prime minister.

Mahathir had constantly attacked Abdullah, who took office in 2003, over policy disagreements which eventually saw the latter's support wane and subsequently replaced by Najib in 2009.

On Monday, Mahathir in a scathing blog expressed impatience at Najib's administration, likening him to Abdullah and stated that he has withdrawn support from the prime minister.

When met by journalists later that night, he had described Najib as "soft" and "quiet" on important issues affecting the country

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