

Mahathir: Umno lacks guts to criticise its leaders

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Umno needs to be reformed so that it can criticise its leaders more courageously, said former premier Dr Mahathir Mohamad today.

At present, the former Umno president claimed that the party's culture is to support its leaders without question.

"Yes, because the leader must be told about other views. A leader cannot just do whatever he likes," he told reporters in Putrajaya.

Mahathir said this when asked to comment on former New Straits Times (NST) group editor-in-chief A Kadir Jasin's statement that Umno is too weak to oust its current president Najib Abdul Razak.

Mahathir also confirmed earlier reports that he had written a letter to Najib criticising him and saying that he is withdrawing support for Najib. However he was later asked by an intermediary to retract it.

"I just said I would withdraw. I didn't receive any reason (for the request), since he asked me to withdraw.

"Later on, I decided that the letter has got no effect on him, so that is when I put it on my blog. I said that leaders must accept criticism," he said.

According to an Asia Sentinel report, the intermediary was Umno secretary-general Tengku Adnan Tengku Mansor and purportedly contained seven demands.

However, Tengku Adnan had denied the report, saying "There is no such thing".

IPP purchases 'public money'

When asked what he thinks about Najib's move to ignore his advice and whether it would be detrimental to the country, Mahathir replied, "I think a leader must listen to everybody, not just somebody around me."

To a question about Kadir's blog post that Mahathir is "curious" about 1Malaysia Development Berhad's (1MDB) acquisition of independent power producers (IPPs), Mahathir said he raised the question because the public has the right to know.

"This is public money. Although it is borrowed money, it belongs to the government, and government spending must follow certain procedures.

"You cannot just spend money as you like," he said, before elaborating on the parliamentary procedures involved.

He clarified that he was not speculating on any ulterior motive behind the deals.

In his blog, Kadir claimed that Tenaga Nasional Berhad (TNB) could acquire the IPPs for a token sum of money if its power purchasing agreement is not renewed.

The agreements last 21 years for gas-fired plants and 25 years for coal-fired plants, he said, and some of these that have been purchased have less than seven years left on the agreement and have long recovered their costs and substantial profits.

"Dr Mahathir was curious why 1MDB bought the ageing IPPs when the government could wait a few more years and get them for 'free'. Something is amiss," he had written.

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