

**Dr M: I won't be PM, Najib need not worry**  
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Dr Mahathir Mohamad had his audience in stitches when he said Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak need not be concerned about him helming the nation again.

The former prime minister said this when responding to a question from the floor at the International Islamic Forum in Putrajaya this morning.

A businessman, who noted that Malaysia would be a leading Islamic nation if Mahathir was still in power, asked Mahathir what he would do to lead the Muslims if that was the case.

"I won't be the next PM," replied Mahathir, who has been a harsh critic of Najib's policies.

"So, the prime minister (Najib) need not worry," he added, drawing laughter from the participants.

On a serious note, Mahathir said he would teach moral and Islamic values in schools if he was still prime minister.

"If I am still PM, I would like to teach moral and Islamic values in schools, so the children would not become 'mat rempit'," he added.

He said the schools only focussed on the way of being a Muslim, teaching the children how to pray, fast and ways to declare them as Muslim, rather than instil the value system into them.

'Idea of absolute gender equality stupid'

On another matter, Mahathir also dismissed the idea of absolute gender equality as "rather stupid".

He said so when addressing the challenges faced by Islam, with Muslims being unable to fed off the new ideas of liberalism and freedom brought by Western civilisation, which he said has given up on religion.

While some of the new ideas were deemed good, Mahathir said most of the ideas were disastrous to Islam, and absolute equality in gender was one of them.

"Yes, we value equality, but there were things that can't be equal," he said, adding that the male and female both genders were different in the physical, mental and spiritual aspects.

"They say, women can do what men can do. But, can they? I don't think so. They say, men

can do what women can do. That's is a stupid idea," he said.

Mahathir sees the 'monopoly' interpretation of Quran has caused the religion to be rejected even by Muslims, which made some of them succumb to Western values.

These people who interpreted the Quran were not prophets, but just some ordinary people, he said.

"But when the people are not willing to accept the interpretation given to them, then they were fond of saying, 'you are apostate and kafir'," he said, adding that Islam allowed differences in teachings.

"This is what happened in Malaysia (also)," he said. "I don't care if they call me Muslim or not. That's for Allah to decide, not them," added a defiant Mahathir.

He said he had witnessed people changed religion when circumstance did not allow them to defend their belief.

The result of this was the regress of the religion in Islamic countries, with its followers becoming lesser, he said.

To another question on Opposition Leader Anwar Ibrahim, who was undergoing his final sodomy appeal at the Federal Court in Palace of Justice, opposite venue Mahathir was speaking at, Mahathir replied: "It is up to the judges' (discretion)."

Asked whether Anwar deserved such trial, he simply snapped, "whatever".

Mahathir refused to respond to the latest poll by Merdeka Center that showed Najib's approval rate to have dropped to 48 percent.

"I haven't read it, I don't want to comment," he said.