

Dr M: If I were PM now, I'd resign

MalaysiaKini.com

Feb 12, 2015

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Admitting that he has been "poor" when it came to choosing successors, former prime minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today he would quit if he was the prime minister today.

Responding to a question, he said a PM should "make things easy" and resign if he cannot perform.

This was an obvious swipe at Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak (left) who appears to have been struck out from Mahathir's good books.

"Nobody pushed me out. When I resigned, I just thought 22 years was too long.

"But if you don't perform and people criticise you, please make things easy for the country," he added.

Mahathir said this in his talk at a public forum titled 'The Malaysian Dilemma' in Kuala Lumpur this morning.

When it was pointed out to him that he had chosen former prime minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and Najib as his successors, Mahathir admitted that he was "not good at selecting successors" and went on to name his former deputy prime ministers, Musa Hitam and Anwar Ibrahim.

"I chose Musa (left) and look what happened. I chose Anwar, you know what happened. As for Najib, I do not know whether my choice was right or wrong," he said.

Mahathir further explained that the problem was because most of them "looked good, like Mr Clean" before they came into power.

"Power corrupts. US President Barack Obama made such an impression but now they want to throw him out," he said.

When it was also further pointed to him that Abdullah has now "found his peace" but Mahathir instead was still "making noise", Mahathir said he could not keep quiet because he had told retirees to remain active.

'If you are not active, you will die'

"And if you are not active, you will die. Although I have retired, I still love this country, I want this country to be peaceful," he said, adding that he had a right to criticise and that his support was not absolute.

"I have a duty to say it, if something is wrong. I was a politician since I was a baby. I will continue to be a pain in the neck for a lot of people," he said.

Admitting that he was reluctant to criticise the prime minister because many would think that he harboured hopes to become the number one leader again, Mahathir said a leader must be corrected.

"If you don't correct a leader, he will think that he's not doing anything wrong."

Meanwhile, when pressed by reporters at a press conference later as to whether Najib should resign, Mahathir simply said: "If the people don't like us, we resign early. If you stay beyond your welcome, even after you have retired, people will not like you.

"I am lucky that even after I have retired, people still shake my hand."

Asked who would be the most suitable candidate to replace Najib, Mahathir said it was "surely not him" as he was almost 90 years old.

He also denied that the Malaysian dilemma was due to the lack of leadership, saying: "No, that is like praising myself. I cannot praise myself".

Mahathir had earlier been asked what would he do with Najib's brainchild, the 1Malaysia Development Bhd (1MDB), if he was the prime minister.

'We shouldn't have 1MDB at all'

"We shouldn't have 1MDB at all. It's not necessary. It's not a national wealth fund because you borrow money for it.

"If you have excess money, you can have 1MDB, but manage it properly. But I would not have 1MDB."

Also at the press conference, Mahathir said issues surrounding the sovereign wealth fund had become a controversy and must thus be explained.

"One way is to have an independent audit for government bodies. People may ask why I did not implement this during my time.

"Well, during my time, not many people complained," he said.

Commenting on the 1MDB's loan from tycoon Ananda Krishnan, Mahathir said it would not solve the problems plaguing the company.

"Because you are borrowing to pay debts. So you still have debts to pay," he said.

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