

Dr M confused between Penang and Putrajaya

MalaysiaKini.com

May 19, 2015

By Steven Sim Chee Keong

MP SPEAKS I refer to Dr Mahathir Mohamad's response to my question at the launch of 'Dr Mahathir's Selected Letters to World Leaders, Volume Two' at the Perdana Leadership Institute on May 18, 2015.

In keeping to the spirit of the book, I asked Dr Mahathir what are some of the key points he would say to the prime minister of Malaysia and to the chief minister of Penang if he were to write letters to them respectively.

His answer has since made headlines: Both should resign.

And the reason given: "We have different governments operating in different states. You have this antagonism thing and you fall back on racist sentiments and things like that."

Dr Mahathir also said something about getting "someone who is well-versed in history" to lead.

Regime change has proven to serve Penang well, even by Dr Mahathir's standard

Let me remind Dr Mahathir, that whether history or governance, at the personal level, 20 years ago when he was still prime minister, he made a remark that Penang is so dirty it should be called 'Pulau Pinang Darul Sampah' (Penang the Garbage State) instead of Penang the Pearl of the Orient. At that time, Penang was run by the same regime as the federal government.

Since 2008, under the leadership of Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng, the Pakatan government has managed to transform Penang from being what Dr Mahathir himself called Darul Sampah into the most liveable city in Malaysia and the 8th most liveable city in Asia.

It is clear that by Dr Mahathir's own standard, Penang under Pakatan was radically transformed for the better.

Perhaps Dr Mahathir has not visited and explored Penang for a while now. I want to extend a personal invitation to him to explore the state he once despised as a garbage state and see for himself the positive changes brought by the Pakatan state government.

Penang's successes widely recognised

In the last eight years since 2008, the Penang state government was praised by national and even international authorities, including federal government bodies, for its economic achievements, support for human rights, people's welfare programmes, environmental care, governance, financial prudence and, most importantly, fierce anti-corruption policy.

This is in contrast to the string of criticism against the federal government on the account of bad management of the country from economic to racial issues. Dr Mahathir himself had recently launched a tirade against Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak and his government for corruption and financial mismanagement.

Did he forget that Lim Guan Eng went to jail for defending a Malay girl?

Finally, I want to reassure Dr. Mahathir by way of reminder that Penang Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng will not “fall back on racists sentiments”.

Dr Mahathir had said that Malaysians easily forget, and perhaps he himself has forgotten how Lim Guan Eng lost everything, including his freedom, for standing up to defend a Malay girl who was allegedly raped by a senior leader of Umno, Mahathir’s own party.

Lim was sentenced to 18 months’ imprisonment in what seemed to be a most sickening perversion of justice, the victim instead of the perpetrator was incarcerated.

But if Lim Guan Eng was willing to go to jail to defend the rights and dignity of a poor Malay girl, Dr Mahathir has either judged wrongly or, worse, maliciously, when he said that Lim, like Najib will “fall back on racists sentiments”.

Is Dr Mahathir afraid of Pakatan because of its success?

It is unfortunate that Dr Mahathir chose to conflate the corrupt and incompetent federal government under Najib with the widely-acknowledged clean and competent Penang state government under Lim Guan Eng.

The question arises whether he did this out of fear, due to the success of Pakatan in a time when many, including Dr Mahathir himself, see Umno-Barisan Nasional as a failed regime.