Dr M explains why he cried when quitting as PM
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Radzi Razak

Dr Mahathir Mohamad yesterday revealed why he cried when he announced his resignation as prime minister to the 2002 Umno general assembly, albeit in his usual sardonic manner.

Responding to a question from the audience, the 90-year-old said: "If you have one million dollars in your pocket and someone comes and takes it away, then you will also cry," he said.

At this, Mahathir got laughs and claps from more than 600 people in the audience at a special 'no rules' dialogue session with him at the Universiti Tun Abdul Razak (Utar) campus in Sungai Long in Cheras, Kuala Lumpur.

Mahathir then elaborated, saying that he had to depend on others to chart the future of the country after being in power for more than two decades.

"For 22 years I could do what I had set up to do. I know that when I stepped down, I would have to rely on others, that I won't know what they will do. So I cried," he said.

The session, hosted by Utar chairperson Dr Ling Liong Sik, who was MCA president and transport minister during the Mahathir era, invited the audience - made up largely of students - to ask anything they wanted to know about the current affairs in the country.

Mahathir, who had just arrived from Japan where he underwent a surgery, made scathing remarks about Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak's administration.

'Our institutions have been hijacked'

He said Malaysia's ride towards Vision 2020 was being derailed because the country's institutions have been 'hijacked'.

"If you get this country going again, we can achieve Vision 2020 and more. Unfortunately, someone has hijacked the system that is supposed to stop the problems and is now using (the system) to create problems," he said.

Mahathir gave the example that institutions such as the police and the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission were being manipulated to enable the people to stay in power.

"In this country, we have systems like the police force… anti-corruption agency, but when the institutions are hijacked and used to prevent the very things that they are to overcome, I think we need to do something," Mahathir said.

He again responded sarcastically to another question on whether the current set of leaders could be trusted to bring the country to greater heights.

"What do you think? Are the current leaders setting us a good example? Stealing money (to the tune of) 42 billion ringgit? We have to do something - not to be violent - but to tell him to go away," he said.

Mahathir's "him" in his response was, to the audience, a clear reference to Najib, although Mahathir did not say his name.

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