

1MDB royal rebuke – Dr M says rulers not rubber stamps

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Former prime minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad today said the Agong and Malay Rulers are no mere rubber stamps and have some executive roles to play.

He said this in response to Deputy Prime Minister Ahmad Zahid Hamidi who reminded the Conference of Rulers that it was subject to the separation of powers doctrine.

Zahid's remark came after the rulers [decreed](#) that investigations into 1MDB be expedited without any cover-up.

"It is true that the Agong and the Malay Rulers are constitutional monarchs.

"But that does not mean that they are just rubber stamps to validate all the acts of their governments," he said in a blog posting today.

Mahathir said the rulers may sometimes act on their own discretion and consult any persons or body of persons that may not necessarily be the cabinet.

"Obviously, if petitions are made or there is a public clamour, the rulers may not listen only to the cabinet.

"The Agong may listen to other people than the cabinet.

"This is only as it should be as failure of the cabinet to address complaints by the people may require the Agong and the rulers to urge the government to respond," he said.

As such, Mahathir said the rulers did not exceed the provisions of the constitution when they commented on Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak's brainchild 1MDB, which is struggling to repay its US\$11 billion debt.

Mahathir went on to highlight several provisions of the federal constitution in stressing that the rulers can exercise some executive functions.

He pointed out that Article 40 states the Yang di-Pertuan Agong is entitled to any information available to the cabinet while Article 40(2) allows the monarch to exercise discretion in the appointment of the prime minister and also in withholding consent to dissolve Parliament.

Campaign against sultans' powers

He added that Article 41 states the Yang di-Pertuan Agong is the supreme commander of the armed forces of the federation, which is not merely limited to the privilege of wearing a uniform.

Likewise, he pointed out that in recent years, the rulers have also exercised discretion in rejecting candidates for the office of the menteri besar by the majority party.

Mahathir's defence of the monarchy's discretionary powers is in contrast to his days as prime minister when he sought to curb their authority.

In 1983, Mahathir spearheaded a campaign against the monarchs which saw the ruling government successfully removing the Yang di-Pertuan Agong's absolute veto power on legislation.

In 1993, Mahathir also successfully introduced limits to the monarchs' immunity from prosecution, allowing them to be charged in a special court.