

People can choose Anwar or DAP if they want to, says Dr M
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The Malaysian political landscape has witnessed numerous bizarre twists of late, and the latest being DAP organ *Rocketkini* featuring an exclusive interview with Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

As expected, the former prime minister rained criticisms on Najib Abdul Razak, reiterated his allegations of corruption against the reigning prime minister, as well as arguments on the need to remove Najib from office.

The article also states that whenever one name was mentioned, Mahathir appeared a little disturbed. He also found it difficult to utter this name.

This was none other than his former heir apparent-turned-nemesis Anwar Ibrahim, who recently penned a scathing letter to PKR leaders on the dangers of working with Mahathir on the Citizens' Declaration.

Mahathir conceded that it was the right of the people to choose whoever they wanted as a leader, including the jailed former opposition leader, but stressed the importance of ousting the current prime minister first.

"As long as Najib is there (in power), everyone can talk, about reformasi or anything else. But nothing will happen. Get rid of Najib, return to democracy. The rakyat can make their own choice (after that).

"It doesn't matter if Anwar comes out (from prison). We return to democracy. The rakyat will choose a government they want.

"... If the rakyat wish to vote for Anwar, so pick Anwar. If they choose a government which will free Anwar, that is their right," he said.

In April, Mahathir had once again claimed that Anwar, whom he sacked as deputy prime minister in 1998, lacked the moral fibre to lead the nation.

"The fact is, people complained about his moral behaviour. For me that behaviour is not acceptable as a person who was about to succeed me as a president of the party.

"I had to expel him from the party. The rest is about his immoral behaviour and the people complained against him. The police took action as a result of the complaint and there was a nine-month trial before he was detained during my time," Mahathir told *The Australian* newspaper.

He also dodged a question on whether he had changed his views on Anwar, saying: "The question of liking or not liking does not arise. We have similar views with regard to Najib."

Anwar, who is currently serving a five-year prison sentence for a sodomy conviction, has always maintained that the charge, similar to the first during Mahathir's reign, was fabricated by his political rivals.

'The people choose their leaders'

Mahathir also conceded that he would be powerless to prevent the people from choosing DAP, a party he once chastised as chauvinistic.

After removing Najib as prime minister, he said, the country could return to the rule of law, the Federal Constitution as well as freedom of expression and assembly, remarks which the *Roketkini* article itself expressed shock over, given Mahathir's stand on street protests during his era.

"After that we can have a general election without Najib. Up to the people. If they want to support reformasi, go ahead.

"The people choose their leaders. We have to accept their choice. If they make the wrong choice, we will face problems and continue to revolve (around the same problems).

"If the people pick DAP, I cannot do anything," Mahathir added.

As for the current administration, the former prime minister said that the democratic space has shrunk under Najib's watch.

"Make a police report, (and you) get arrested. Want to go abroad, they (the authorities) monitor. The mass media, newspapers are controlled," he said.

Ironically, Mahathir's 22-year tenure was also replete with similar accusations, with Mahathir often referred to as a dictator, as opposed to a leader of a democratic nation.

Najib, on the other hand, has accused Mahathir of conspiring to topple him from power and has denied the allegations made against him.

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