

Siti Hasmah: I thought Mahathir was being too harsh on Najib at first...
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Former Prime Minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad's wife Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali initially thought that her husband was too harsh on Najib Abdul Razak after he was sworn in as the country's prime minister in 2009.

In her autobiography 'My Name is Hasmah', Siti Hasmah related how signs of a rift between Mahathir and Najib had appeared as early as after the latter became prime minister.

A dinner was then arranged at Seri Perdana for the two to patch things up.

But when Najib reappeared soon after the meeting, Hasmah knew that this was not a good sign.

Najib, she said, had confirmed this, informing her that Mahathir wanted to leave immediately.

Asking what had happened between the two at their home later, Mahathir said he had told Najib that he was doing a terrible job as prime minister.

"I was a little shocked. Najib had only recently assumed office and while I too was concerned with how he appeared to be managing the country, I couldn't help feeling that Mahathir had been too harsh on him.

"He was still fairly new to the job," said Hasmah, adding how Mahathir himself had encountered a difficult start as deputy prime minister.

Sadness and bewilderment

But after that night, other developments had occurred and Najib, she said, is no longer new to the job.

"Mahathir has been critical of Najib's handling of national issues and the ramifications on our sovereignty and independence, to say nothing of the more recent controversies surrounding Najib himself.

“On a personal level, I feel deep sadness and bewilderment: what happened to the Najib I once knew?”

“Despite all this, I remain hopeful that the country will one day get back on track,” wrote Siti Hasmah in her book.

It has been more than a year since Mahathir came out with his open criticisms against Najib, especially with regard to his handling of state investment arm 1MDB.

Since then, Mahathir has quit Umno and even spearheaded the Save Malaysia movement, which calls for the resignation of Najib. Last week, Mahathir even announced that a new political party will be formed.

Siti Hasmah’s autobiography, launched in conjunction with her 90th birthday, is a collection of stories of her upbringing, her career in medicine and adventures with her husband.

The book was written with the help of a team of editors from Salt Media Group and published by Kumpulan Karang kraf under its Alaf21 imprint.

The 248-page book will be sold for RM80 at bookstores. Its Bahasa Malaysia version, ‘*Nama Saya Hasmah*’, will also be published soon.

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