

## **Dr M makes surprise appearance at DAP convention**

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Former Prime Minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad made a surprise appearance at the 50th DAP National Convention today.

He was seated on stage together with senior party leaders, between DAP parliamentary leader Lim Kit Siang and party founder and advisor Dr Chen Man Hin.

Also present on stage were PKR president Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail and Amanah president Mohamad Sabu, who were representing parties that were officially allied with DAP in Pakatan Harapan.

Mahathir was once DAP's biggest nemesis during his 22-year tenure as Umno president and in the many years after.

Despite this, in his new mantle as Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia (Bersatu) president, Mahathir was received with rapturous applause from the 845 DAP delegates present - possibly second only to the welcome received by another guest Maria Chin Abdullah, who heads the Bersih movement.

At a press conference later, Mahathir said his maiden visit to a DAP national convention was a new experience.

"It seems that DAP's Malaysian-ness is even stronger than that of BN and Umno. I see amongst DAP members that some have a darker skin, some are a bit brown, and not all are yellow and so on. No such thing, it's just the three races here.

"It shows that DAP is not a Chinese party. It is a multiracial party, and even the non-Chinese members can hold high positions such as (the late chairperson) Karpal Singh who once held high office, can speak the national language, and so on.

"So it is an experience for me," he said.

### **'Wrong impression'**

Mahathir conceded he previously had the wrong impression of DAP in the past.

Although DAP is often portrayed by its critics as a Chinese party, its party anthem and the speeches by DAP secretary-general Lim Guan Eng and acting chairperson Tan Kok Wai were delivered in Malay.

He praised Guan Eng's speech for stressing that DAP upholds the federal constitution, including the constitutional monarchy, the special position of the Malays and the national language, and the position of Islam as the religion of the federation, where other religions

may also be practiced.

"You won't find this in MCA," he said.

Previously on Nov 25, DAP organising secretary Anthony Loke told reporters that Mahathir **would not** be invited to the party's national convention.

He said this is because Bersatu is not yet a member of the Pakatan Harapan coalition, and the tradition is to only invite members of the federal opposition coalition to the convention.

Umno owned daily *Utusan Malaysia* **criticised** this as a 'betrayal' of Bersatu by DAP, saying Mahathir had made compromises without reciprocation from DAP.

### **Invitation kept as 'surprise'**

Asked about the sudden change of heart, Guan Eng said the party wanted to have "an element of surprise" in Mahathir's attendance.

To a question how he feels about having the former premier as a guest at the convention after being detained under the Internal Security Act 1960 (ISA) during Mahathir's tenure, Guan Eng said the matter is in the past.

"What is more important is saving Malaysia. If it is necessary for me to be detained to save Malaysia, I think all DAP leaders are willing to do so.

"And as I have said just now, if you compare Mahathir and (Prime Minister) Najib Abdul Razak, Mahathir does not have RM2.6 billion or RM4.2 billion in his personal bank account, and he is willing to come forward to save Malaysia.

"Even he cannot accept this, so we are willing to work together with those who cannot accept the 1MDB scandal and the RM2.6 billion donation scandal," he said.

Kit Siang, who was also detained under the ISA during Mahathir's premiership, echoed his son's sentiments.

He said Malaysians must be prepared to break new ground to "reach for the stars", and to avoid the country becoming a kleptocracy.

Najib had consistently denied wrongdoing in the 1MDB scandal, saying he had never abused public funds for personal benefit.

Meanwhile, Mahathir reiterated that Bersatu would join Pakatan Harapan "as soon as possible", but declined to provide a timeframe on when this is expected to take place.

"Be patient," he urged when asked.