

## **Riza's 'half-half' deal has thieves making beeline outside court, quips Dr M**

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Following the deal between former premier Najib Abdul Razak's stepson Riza Aziz and the government, Dr Mahathir Mohamad said thieves are making a beeline outside court seeking a similar settlement.

Under Perikatan Nasional's rule, the former premier quipped that thieves can return half of their loot to escape punishment.

"We found that several days ago, thieves can escape punishment if they are willing to give back half or some of the amount they have stolen.

"This is a new policy that I have never heard of before," he told a press conference in Putrajaya this afternoon.

Last week, Riza was granted a discharge not amounting to an acquittal (DNAA) for money laundering involving US\$248 million (RM1.08 billion) linked to 1MDB

funds.

Judge Azman Ahmad had allowed the application by ad hoc prosecutor Gopal Sri Ram on the grounds that an agreement had been reached where the accused would hand over "several million" ringgit to the federal government.

Mahathir said Pakatan Harapan won the 14th general election with the aim of taking action against those who robbed the nation.

"But now we see that if someone swindles over RM1 billion, then agrees to return some RM400 million, which is not even half of the amount, they can get away.

"If this is the new policy for Malaysia, then all thieves can steal. And when they do it, they can be sure to enjoy half of the money while the other half can be returned to the government so they won't get punished.

"So now, all the thieves are waiting to get to court so that they can just return half of what they have stolen," he added.

According to Mahathir, while the US has a practice of plea bargaining to get stolen items returned from criminals, the system there gives the advantage to the government.

However, this is not the case in Malaysia as not even half of the money in Riza's case would be recovered.

He said this was not what the people had voted for as Pakatan Harapan had won the 14th general election with the pledge to go after kleptocrats.

"We won the 14th general election on our promise to go against the kleptocracy government, the thieving government.

"But I find that there were some who pretended to share the same intention, but when they got the power, they have instead revived the kleptocracy government to return to power."

While Mahathir did not mention any name, it is understood that he was referring to prime minister Muhyiddin Yassin who used to be with Pakatan Harapan before forming a new government with PN.

Blame game shows gov't knows the deal is wrong

Meanwhile, Mahathir claims that the recent finger-pointing incidents over the Riza deal shows that the government realised that what they did was wrong.

"There was a blame game, accusing this person and that people were the one who made the decision.

"They realise what they did was wrong, that is why they were quick to tell what happened."

The former premier also claimed that the monies to be recovered were going to be used by the PN government to cover what they have promised in the RM230 billion Covid-19 economic stimulus package.

According to him, PN had allegedly failed to fulfil their promises under the stimulus package as the funds are not coming from the government's coffer.

"The allocation is so huge. But from what we heard, the money has yet to be distributed to the targetted (recipients).

"On the other, the fund is not coming from the government but other sources, and when they get to recover what had been stolen, then they will use the money to repay (the cash used for the stimulus injection)."

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