

Keeping gov't in check is not against royal advice, says Mahathir

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Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the opposition will continue to keep the Perikatan Nasional government in check and this does not go against the Yang di-Pertuan Agong's advice.

"I believe His Majesty did not mean that we (MPs) cannot speak about the problems in the country at all. If we can't even speak, then it is better that we just abolish the Parliament," the Bersatu chairperson said.

The former premier said this when asked about Sultan Abdullah Ahmad Shah's decree at the opening ceremony of the 14th Dewan Rakyat's third session this morning, where the King urged MPs not to drag the country into another political crisis.

"But we still have a Parliament, which will hold its sittings where we (the opposition) would have to speak up if the government does things that are not

right," Mahathir told a press conference in Putrajaya.

"It does not mean that there should be no sitting at all. This was not what Tuanku meant. The King told us not to call people bad names and such.

"And we are not doing that. What we do is criticise the government, and it is the duty of all MPs whether they are with the government or outside to advise on issues that the rakyat is facing.

"So we are not going against the advice of His Majesty," he added.

During the opening ceremony of the Dewan Rakyat sitting this morning, Sultan Abdullah urged MPs not to have the country enter another round of political uncertainty.

"I would like to advise not to drag this country into another political uncertainty at a time when the people are facing hardship as a result of the (Covid-19) pandemic.

"It is also for this reason my government had decided to set the Parliament sitting for one day with my speech as the only agenda," the King had said.

Sultan Abdullah was referring to the sitting, which had been shortened to only include his opening speech without any debate by MPs.

Mahathir (above) claimed that it was not the opposition that should be looked at with regards to the King's advice, but rather the PN government.

He said that it is PN who had been playing politics during the pandemic, which saw the fall of several state governments under Pakatan Harapan.

"So when it is said that we should not play politics, I hope the focus is given to the government, because we are not capable of doing anything else other than defend our current position," he said.

Harapan welcomes King's decree

Following the Yang di-Pertuan Agong's advice, Harapan in a joint statement with Mahathir and Warisan president Shafie Apdal expressed their appreciation of the monarch's concern over the country's political situation.

"We welcome Tuanku's reminder that the differences in opinion should not be marred with insults, and that there is the need to address racial polarisation and control all kinds of provocations as well as belief and values that are against (the

country's) norm, culture and laws," said the statement.

The leaders said they also appreciate the King's worry about issues of corruption and abuse of power, which can negatively impact the country's development and taint its image at the international level.

"We also hope that the issue of Covid-19 especially concerning the economic stimulus package can be given special focus, where there had been many reports of corruption which caused financial aid to not reach the intended targets.

"This is very worrying as it involves groups that are really in need of assistance, and we are of the view that this must be discussed at the soonest possible."

Meanwhile, Mahathir during the press conference criticised the government's decision to limit today's Dewan Rakyat sitting to only include the King's speech.

He said Parliament was supposed to be a platform where MPs can speak up for the people.

"But now it has become a 'gedung bisu' (place where you are silenced)."

Mahathir said Covid-19 was not supposed to be made an excuse to limit the

sitting, claiming that arrangements have already been made by the Parliament management to abide by health authority's advice.

Among the measures that MPs had to go through, according to the Langkawi MP, was to have their temperatures taken and wash their hands twice before they are allowed inside.

Each MP had to sit on chairs that are separated more than 1m apart.

The sitting could go on until late evening without any risk of spreading the virus, he quipped.

"If they were to allow us to meet until late at night, it would not cause any problem related to the pandemic.

"We know that today everyone is free to go out to eat, even to go shopping. But in Parliament, we are not going to go anywhere near other people.

"But they still don't allow us to sit for one day. Only for a few hours," Mahathir said.

He said it would be the end of democracy if MPs are no longer allowed to speak in

Parliament.

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