

## **Mahathir open to cooperate with Muhyiddin despite objecting Budget 2021**

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**Reuters**

Langkawi MP Dr Mahathir Mohamad is open to the idea of cooperating with Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin despite openly rejecting Budget 2021.

In a live-streamed interview with Astro Awani, Mahathir cited how UK's Labour Party and its Conservative Party were able to set aside their differences to work together in the national interest of fighting Germany decades ago.

The nonagenarian said this when asked to confirm claims that he could reconcile with Muhyiddin if there is a means to do so.

"There is a way, but there is no need for me to talk about the ways for (me) to go back to work with him," said Mahathir.

"I still think during this tough time, we need to reduce politics, especially partisan politics, and prioritise national politics instead when we are facing a

major challenge in dealing with Covid-19 and the economic fallout - this should be our focus," he added.

The former prime minister said, in the past, there were attempts to get him on the Perikatan Nasional (PN) bandwagon but he turned down the offer as he declined to be with the six Umno leaders facing criminal charges.

"They did (extend an olive branch to me) but I said it has to be based on (the right) condition.

"They wanted to portray me as though I had joined them, that's not the way, I found that many things were not right.

"One thing is that this government is more or less like the Najib Abdul Razak's administration which opted to use money to buy over the people's representatives and topple the government. I could not accept such a move," he said.

"They proposed setting up the PN government and asked me to be the head, which I was disinclined," he added.

Earlier today, Mahathir said he and his "friends" would not support Budget 2021

when the vote is called in the Dewan Rakyat tomorrow at the policy stage.

Meanwhile, Mahathir revealed that Umno chief advisor Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah (above), also known as Ku Li, had wanted to topple the PN government.

"He had a proposal, purportedly to change the government and he felt that he could get enough numbers from the government side to quit PN. (The plan) however, did not materialise.

"I agree with anyone (with a plan to do so) but he has to have the support of the majority. If Ku Li could get the support, then he can become the prime minister," Mahathir said.

A meeting between Mahathir and Tengku Razaleigh on Oct 26 had sparked speculation on the possibility of forming a unity government, which was denied by Mahathir.

The veteran politician said many were uneasy with Budget 2021 as they saw it as an effort of handing out cash without a clear purpose, and that it is being used to garner support as a large sum will go to certain individuals and organisations.

"However, the problem faced by us are not given attention. There are (certain)

allocations that should not be included in the budget.

"Why is there a need to build new buildings when we need funds to fight Covid-19? All these less significant expenses should be dropped.

"If they agree to accept our proposals, we will support it. We cannot support it as a whole as it is like signing a blank cheque," he added.

Mahathir said the people, including migrant workers, should be given free Covid-19 screening multiple times and the government should allocate RM3 billion on a vaccine for the disease.

All eyes are on the Dewan Rakyat tomorrow as the PN government will seek the support of the 222 MPs to pass Budget 2021 at the policy stage.

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