

Mahathir: First thing I'll do if ever become PM again is abolish 3R

Malaysiakini

19 May 2025

Qistina Nadia Dzulqarnain

Former two-time prime minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad intends to abolish punishments on those who speak of 3R (race, religion and royalty) sentiments if he were to assume the role again.

Mahathir, who will turn 100 on July 10, said the measure is the "first thing" he will implement if he is given the chance to lead the nation again, as voices critical of his administration should not be silenced.

"I must know what the people are thinking. If their mouths are kept closed, they might have a bad opinion of you, but you feel that they are okay.

"When you don't respond to the problems and feelings (expressed by the rakyat), then the country cannot become developed (as) we need freedom of speech," the nonagenarian said during a dialogue session at his book launch in Putrajaya today.

His book, titled "A Conversation with Tun Dr Mahathir bin Mohamad: A Legacy of

Leadership and Vision", was launched at the Perdana Leadership Foundation.

The foundation's trustee, Vaseehar Hassan, and economist Muhammed Abdul Khalid moderated the dialogue session.

While Mahathir appeared to be unenthusiastic over the possibility of him helming Putrajaya once again, he expressed willingness to share his insights with the government for the betterment of the nation.

"If I become prime minister again, God forbid, I know a few things I should do.

"Even if I'm not the prime minister, if the government is willing to listen to this old man, I'm willing to give some ideas," he added.

Mahathir, who has often accused Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim of stifling public sentiments by leveraging on 3R rules, stressed that any government should be able to lend its ear to admonishments and be open to implementing changes if transgressions occur.

"What's happening now - and even during (former prime minister) Najib Abdul Razak's time - is that people are not free to criticise the government.

"You need the opposition to point out where you have gone wrong. If we have a

one-party state where that party is carried by its own ideas, they will have no way of knowing when a mistake has been made and correcting it," he pointed out.

Mahathir asserted that the management of a nation hinges on the freedom to exchange "ideas", noting that leaders should be able to respond to what is happening around them and choose the best path forward for the nation.

Views on Najib

When asked for his views on a hypothetical scenario where Najib, who is imprisoned over corruption charges, manages to become prime minister again, Mahathir voiced a cynical view of the matter.

"(Before Najib assumed the role of Umno president), Umno had its own objectives, principally to struggle for the betterment of the people, country and religion.

"Under Najib, instead of focusing on (such struggles), he brought in another different objective; he was talking about 'cash is king'.

"(Najib's objective) says corruption is alright, that this country can be ruled by corrupt practices, that you can become a prime minister simply by offering

money," he added.

Claiming that Najib's advocacy of such a principle had caused Umno to "no longer be Umno", Mahathir said Najib is unlikely to change his ways if he is given another shot at the premiership.

"I don't think (Najib) would have changed much. He would still be thinking that the best way to become the prime minister is to give money to the people.

"If you don't have the money, then you can borrow it (before) stealing it. To me, that is not acceptable.

"If (Najib) does come back, I think he should just apologise and say 'sorry, I made a mistake'," Mahathir added.

In August 2022, the Federal Court upheld Najib's one count of abuse of power, three counts of criminal breach of trust, and three money laundering charges linked to the 1MDB global financial scandal.

The former Pekan MP was sentenced to 12 years' jail time as well as an RM210 million fine.

However, in February last year, the Pardons Board slashed his jail time to six

years and reduced the court-ordered fine to RM50 million.

Education system

When asked for his opinions on reforming the national education system, the former education minister said there is a need to ensure the system is kept up to date with the latest technological advancements.

In particular, Mahathir said the Education Ministry should consider studying how teaching methods can be improved by incorporating technology to ensure the best levels of knowledge are imparted to students.

He said such initiatives could be implemented by recording "good teachers" and showing the videos to students across the nation, thus allowing all classes to have the benefit of the "best teacher".

"I am of the opinion that our education system is a bit outdated.

"Times are changing around us and we must respond to such changes - if not, any knowledge gained in schools will be irrelevant," he cautioned.

He also said the government should put more emphasis on moral education, which could aid in producing "morally upright" citizens who will not allow

themselves to be corrupted.

Copyright © 1999-2025 Mkini Dotcom Sdn. Bhd

Source: <https://www.malaysiakini.com/news/743643>