

Dr M gave PM earful on NEM
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Former Prime Minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad has expressed his "constructive criticism" to Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak on the latter's New Economic Model.

"I have made my views known to the prime minister," said Mahathir, without elaborating when and how this was done, when met after Friday prayers at the national mosque today.

In addition, Mahathir said he had also written to Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Idris Jala over the same topic.

Mahathir said this when asked about his open criticism of certain aspects of the NEM - the Najib administration's plan to develop Malaysia into a high-income economy - such as the gradual peeling away of pro-bumiputra affirmative action policies and merit-based policies.

Mahathir added that it was normal for people to have differing views and it was acceptable for him to share his thoughts with the two individuals.

Moreover, he points out that even Najib had appealed to the public for input on the 2011 Budget.

"I'm not saying that my views are right. Even during my time as prime minister, people criticise my ideas," he said.

NEP proven to work

Mahathir also disagreed with critics that meritocracy was necessary as opposed to the affirmative-action policies outlined by the NEP.

He rubbished claims that affirmative-action policies had stunted the country's progress, stressing that Malaysia recorded highest growths before than other developing countries.

"So you cannot say NEP (and the protection of rights of the Malays and bumiputras) as an obstruction (for growth)," he said.

On claims of growing support for Malay rights pressure groups such as Perkasa, Mahathir said such groups are increasingly popular because of Umno's short comings.

He said that Umno, a party he once led for 22 years, had failed to protect the rights of the bumiputras and its followers increasingly disenchanted.

Meanwhile, Mahathir said that the string of protests outside the Malaysian embassy in Jakarta were "stupid".

He said that it should not be condoned and believed that some protestors may have been paid to do so.