

Mahathir returns, fires another salvo
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Syed Jaymal Zahiid

Soon after he touched down at Subang Airport in Kuala Lumpur, Dr Mahathir Mohamad couldn't resist firing yet another salvo at his handpicked successor-turn-nemesis Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.
MCPX

He's more afraid of Singapore than Umno members," the former premier told a crowd of 300 supporters who had gathered to welcome him back from a week-long overseas trip.

mahathir touchdown in subang meet supporters 270508 loud speakerMahathir, who spoke to his supporters through a loud-hailer for about five minutes from the sunroof of a silver multi-purpose van (MPV), accused Abdullah as a traitor.

"Negara cet tu ja pun dia takut (He is afraid of even a tiny country). What kind of a leader is he?" he thundered as the crowd chanted, "Abdullah undur!" (Abdullah step down!)

While Mahathir did not mention Pulau Batu Puteh, he was clearly referring to last Friday's International Court of Justice decision against Malaysia in its dispute with Singapore over the sovereignty of the strategic uninhabited island south of Johor.

mahathir touchdown in subang meet supporters 270508 02The ex-PM has just returned from Japan after addressing the annual Nikkei conference which was also incidentally attended by Abdullah. The two protagonists however addressed the event on separate days.

"When I was Umno president, he was never loyal to me, but I never made it look like he was not loyal to the party. I let him contest for the vice-presidency, the deputy presidency and now he is the president," he said, looking fresh in a pin-stripe light blue shirt and a smart grey jacket.

Mahathir also blasted Abdullah as a manipulator who "label those who oppose him as traitors to the party".

"I am not acting on any pressure," Mahathir continued, "I am doing this because Umno under Abdullah has forgotten its roots, its struggle for the party - for the Malays and for the nation."

Dr M cites Malay proverb

He added that Abdullah was a person who had forgotten his roots and was not "grateful" as it was he who handpicked him to be his successor.

"There is a Malay proverb that goes: hutang emas boleh di bayar tapi hutang budi di bawa mati (debt of gold can be repaid but debt of courtesy, we carry to the death).

mahathir touchdown in subang meet supporters 270508 sun roof"But I am not even dead and he has shown...", said Mahathir who could not finish his sentence as his voice was drown by shouts of "Hidup Mahathir! Hidup Mahathir!" (Long live Mahathir!).

Some of the supporters, who had come all the way from Mahathir's home state of Kedah, also yelled in support of Mahathir's youngest son, "Hidup Mukhriz!" (Long live Mukhriz!). Mukhriz, an ardent critic of Abdullah in Umno, is member of parliament for Jerlun, Kedah.

Mahathir, who appeared elated by the enthusiastic reception, thanked his supporters for their presence.

mahathir touchdown in subang meet supporters 270508 01"When I was in Umno, I received the same reception as today so there is no difference of being an Umno member and not being a member," he said.

Mahathir sent shockwaves last week when he announced his decision to leave the party which he had led for 22 years in what was believed to be an attempt to trigger a domino effect that would see a mass resignation of Umno members.

This however did not happen when Umno leaders after an emergency meeting with Abdullah accepted Mahathir's resignation and pledged to back the embattled party leader.

Meanwhile Abdullah also returned from Japan today, with the aircraft carrying him landing at the same Royal Malaysian Air Force Base in Subang at 9.30pm.

About 1,000 people were at the airport to greet the prime minister.

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