

Mahathir wants to be 'unofficial adviser' to government
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Just two days after rejoining Umno, ex-premier Dr Mahathir Mohamad ruled out taking a senior minister's post in Najib Abdul Razak's cabinet, but is open to being an unofficial adviser to the government.

"No, no, no position in cabinet. No position at all," Mahathir told a press conference after a luncheon talk with government servants in Taiping today.

However, when asked if he would be an adviser to the federal government, Mahathir replied: "Unofficially yes."

Mahathir had quit Umno last year in protest of the leadership of his successor Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, but rejoined after Najib assumed the prime minister's post on April 3.

As Najib is widely seen as Mahathir's protégé, many had expressed concern that this marked a return to his mentor's authoritarian style of administration.

"They (critics) have nothing more to say. Last time they said 'Mahathirism'. What is wrong with Mahathirism? This country developed in 22 years because of Mahathirism lah," he said, to a question.

Mahathir also voiced approval for several actions instituted by Najib immediately after officially over from Abdullah.

"Umno is now willing to listen to public opinion, at least that's what Najib (right) says. He has taken the first step by releasing ISA detainees," said Mahathir.

"He lifted the suspension of Harakah and Suara Keadilan. He (also) met the people on his second day as prime minister."

On whether he was confident of Najib's leadership, Mahathir replied: "I'm confident that Najib reflects the original Umno."

He did not, however, rule out the possibility that he would be critical of the government, as he was during the Abdullah administration.

"If the government does wrong (then I will speak up). I self-criticise. That is my habit," he said.

U-turn on Perak turmoil

Mahathir appeared to have withdrawn his criticism of the Barisan Nasional (BN) takeover of Perak, by addressing Zambry Abd Kadir as the Perak menteri besar.

Speaking at a press conference after a BN rally in Simpang this morning, he said: "It is a matter of fact now (that BN is leading the state government).

“So we have to support, unless they can prove that (the takeover was) legally wrong. Then it is a different matter. But at the moment it seems like the BN government is accepted by the people.”

During his own tenure as premier, Mahathir had seen the PBS government fall in Sabah, following mass defections in 1994.

On March 14, Mahathir had delivered a lecture in which he explicitly said the political turmoil in Perak was the result of the takeover in which BN “didn’t follow the law”.

He said that BN had been in too much of a rush in taking over the state and later removing Mohd Nizar Jamaluddin as menteri besar without going through a vote of no-confidence in the legislative assembly.

Mahathir also stated that BN has urged the sultan to remove the menteri besar, although there is no provision for this in both the Perak and federal constitutions.

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