

Dr M casts doubts over Rohaizat's candidacy
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Former Umno president Dr Mahathir Mohamad today contributed to the mounting pressure on the party's candidate for the Permatang Pasir by-election Rohaizat Othman.

Asked what he thought about the matter, the 83-year-old statesman zeroed in on Rohaizat's alleged second wife.

"I was told he is accused of having two wives, but he said 'No'. Then someone showed the picture (of the woman). I don't know if such a person is qualified to be come an elected representative or not.

"I don't know *lah*," said Mahathir with a grin.

The candidate's rivals from PAS have claimed that Rohaizat registered his second marriage to a woman known as 'Rafizah Mohd Ali' which the latter has denied. PAS Youth chief Nasrudin Hasan alleged that Rafizah accused Rohaizat of treating her as a mistress and failed to provide adequate *nafkah* (subsistence).

Nasrudin told reporters that Rohaizat would be unfit to represent the public if he cannot even handle domestic affairs.

It cannot be determined if pictures of Rafizah have surfaced publicly as suggested by Mahathir, but the media in Permatang Pasir have gotten wind that certain quarters intend to circulate a video recording of a recent interview with the woman.

Rohaizat's credibility first took a beating when it was revealed that the 38-year-old lawyer had been disbarred after being found guilty of financial misconduct.

Dr M on newspapers and Nik Aziz

Asked about the recent trend of newspapers stoking racial tensions, Mahathir showed particular disdain for the Chinese dailies, of which he observes through translated copies.

"When the Malays don't understand the Chinese papers, they are not too angry, but the Chinese understand what the Malays say because most Chinese understand Bahasa Malaysia though they don't speak it well.

"But when they (Chinese papers) say something harmful, we don't understand," he said, adding that it would be a good idea to translate all vernacular papers to Malay.

Mahathir also criticized PAS spiritual leader Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat for likening Umno to infidels, and saying that the party's members would not be able to go to heaven.

"He knows that if he accuses a fellow Muslim of being an infidel, the accuser thereby becomes the infidel. The whole world knows that Malays are Muslims," he said.

In 2000, the Fatwa Council decreed that only Allah can determine who goes to heaven and deputy premier Muhyiddin Yassin has latched on to this in the Permatang Pasir campaign, accusing Nik Aziz of going against the Fatwa Council.

Asked on this, Mahathir drew parallels between Nik Aziz and PKR de facto leader Anwar Ibrahim.

"Anwar said that the judges, attorney-general and IGP were all wrong. Only Anwar is right. Looks like Nik Aziz is becoming like that. To disagree with him, means being wrong," he said with a chuckle.

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