

Dr M: Worse people than Ibrahim Ali in Umno...
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Former Umno president Dr Mahathir Mohamad said he has no problems with Pasir Mas independent parliamentarian Ibrahim Ali returning to Umno. Responding to a question at a press conference in Putrajaya today, he said with a laugh: "I think a lot of people in Umno should be out of the party as they are worse than Ibrahim."

However, he stressed that it is up to the top leadership to decide on the matter.

"I am a good friend of Ibrahim Ali. Whether (he is) inside the party, outside the party, or when (he is) under the detention, he is still my good friend (although) many people don't agree (with him)," he said.

To a question as to whether Ibrahim will be any good for the party, he smiled as he said: "It depends on how he behaves."

Ibrahim is reportedly keeping his options open on rejoining Umno and may do so if the party can successfully translate its reform plan into reality.

He became an Umno member in 1981 but was sacked for contesting as an Independent in the 2004 general election. He again contested as an Independent, on a PAS ticket, against Barisan Nasional in the last general election.

Ibrahim's plan has drawn flak from Kelantan Umno Youth, which has urged the party's supreme council to consider it carefully to avoid a recurrence of the past.

On the MCA crisis

Mahathir (*right*) further remarked that MCA will lose "half of its supporters", no matter who emerges victorious at its upcoming second extraordinary general meeting (EGM).

He compared the party's problems with his own fallout with vocal critic and long-time Gua Musang MP Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah in the late 1980s.

"It will be hard to solve the problem (if they have another EGM) but I think MCA members are intelligent and I'm sure they will make a good choice.

"But I am only talking of my experience. When you have challengers at that level, no matter who wins, you would lose half the supporters - just like when Ku Li (Tengku Razaleigh) challenged me back then. When I won, he formed Semangat 46."

Mahathir declined to elaborate on MCA matters, saying he did not want to interfere with the "family affairs" of another party.

"I am just giving an example of my past experience (so that) people (can) learn. But now, many people are sensitive," he said.

MCA is facing a leadership crisis, with president Ong Tee Keat clinging to his post even though a recent EGM indicated that the party has lost confidence in his leadership.

Ong has instead called for another EGM to allow delegates to decide if fresh polls are needed. This has widened the rift among top leaders, who are now competing for control of MCA.

'We should have more holidays'

Mahathir was also asked to comment on Sept 16 being made a national public holiday from next year, to commemorate Hari Malaysia.

Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak (*left*) made the announcement this morning, saying this will help celebrate the formation of Malaysia in the 1Malaysia spirit.

Responded an acerbic Mahathir: "We should have more holidays, (so we have) less work. Work is not important, holiday is important."

He refused to answer directly when asked if he welcomes the move.

"I don't know. I do not want to criticise the prime minister but they told me (during my tenure) that I was a workaholic," he said.

"I work even now after my retirement, and people get fed up. I didn't stop working. So actually I'm on wrong holidays, every day is a holiday (for me), it is just I am not working for anybody."

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