

# Dr M: Ex-colleagues trying to demonise me

## > FROM PACE 1

"I'm interested in finding answers to why Agusta was sold to an Italian company with a two-Euro capital. Why do you sack a chief executive officer (of Proton) who has been managing well and made the company profitable? And why appoint somebody who made it unprofitable, and lose RM500mil?

"Why was the (Johor) bridge not built when work had already started and it was already agreed to by the Cabinet and when Singapore was not complaining?

"Instead, the focus is Dr Mahathir should keep his mouth shut."

He said he had written questions to the relevant authorities, including the Proton management and Securities Commission but had yet to get answers.

"Why did they sack Tengku Mahaleel? What is his fault? They should explain. I am the adviser," he said.

"I want to know why the bridge project was ditched. Is it because of a lack of funds? As far I know, there is money.

"That's why I asked, but some people say Dr Mahathir should not speak. He has

retired; he should go back and sleep."

On Abdullah's reaction, Dr Mahathir said: "I am happy that he said that it is my right to speak. Yes, very good. Thank you very much. So now I'm speaking because he said I have the right to speak; but some others said I have no right to speak."

Dr Mahathir also expressed disappointment that some ministers who were also in his Cabinet were questioning his right to criticise instead answering his questions.

"What is disappointing is that instead of explaining, all the talk is whether I have been right in making the criticism, whether I'm following the Umno tradition," he said.

"Maybe they don't have answers, that is why they try to demonise me or try to make me appear very bad.

"Apparently, from the way ministers invariably support everything the Prime Minister says, there cannot be much debate in the Cabinet.

"Two days before, they say we will build the bridge. When the Prime Minister said we would not build the

bridge, everybody said we would not build the bridge. I am a bit sad.

"I raised questions, none has been explained. Instead, they say Dr Mahathir should not speak like that. He has no right as an ex-prime minister... should go back and sleep, not disturb people.

"Every time I say something, the same people or members of the Cabinet will give their standard comments.

"I say something today, I'm quite sure you will ask the ministers to say something. These were my Cabinet ministers. Before, they agreed with me."

Asked whether he would continue to speak out on government policies and decisions, he replied: "If there is anything wrong, I claim the right to ask questions. Or is it that we cannot ask questions?"

Asked whom he meant when he said the Government came under the "influence of people with an agenda", he replied: "A lot of people talk about it. I don't dare to tell. You will ask others to comment 'Why Dr Mahathir say like that?'"

Asked his opinion of Umno Youth deputy chief Khairy Jamaluddin, he replied: "He is (Abdullah's) son-in-law. You want to fish for information so that I will react. You are trying to get me into a controversy. I understand that Khairy is the son-in-law. That's all."

On Tengku Razaleigh's call to Abdullah and Dr Mahathir to meet to resolve the issue, as the controversy might split Umno, he said: "I think he is competent to make such a remark because once upon a time, he challenged me.

"When he lost, he formed a new party, he split the party. He knows about it, that's why he is advising me not to do that.

"Just like Tun Musa Hitam. He said that (what I did) was not in keeping with party tradition because, once before, he also made that mistake. Now he wants to warn me not make the same mistake."

Asked whether he had posed his questions to Abdullah when they met in Japan recently, Dr Mahathir said: "It was a 10-minute meeting. He was talking about a lot of things; I was listening."