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PUTRAJAYA: In his most direct attack on his successor to date, former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad yesterday said Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi had reneged on a promise to continue with his policies.

Expressing some regrets over picking Abdullah as his successor, Mahathir lamented: "I chose him and ox peeled a degree of gratefulness (sic). But I was told I had been involved in mega projects and had finished the (government's) money."

Conceding that he had made mistakes in supporting people who later slabbed him in the back, he said: "I have a habit of choosing the wrong people".

Mahathir had four deputies during his 22 years in power. The first, Tun Musa Hitam, quit after falling out with him in 1986, and the second, the late Tun Ghafar Baba, was ousted by Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, who later clashed with Mahathir and was sacked and jailed.

Mahathir said he had chosen Abdullah over Datuk Seri Najib Razak to be his successor despite the fact that Najib had the higher votes as Umno vice-president to fill the vacuum left by the sacking of Anwar.

Mahathir said this at a press conference called to talk about a global peace forum that the Perdana Leadership Foundation is organising. After the briefing, he look questions from, journalists, including the foreign media.

"The (present) government not only did not do what was promised (to me) but instead reversed many of the decisions made when the leader (Abdullah) was part of the (previous) government," he said:

"I tolerated this as much as possible, including the charge that I finished all of the government's money ... that the government was bankrupt and couldn't have any more projects.

"I kept quiet but when something that is done that is really harmful, I think I would be failing my duty as an ordinary citizen and an ex-prime minister if I don't direct attention to these matters."

Mahathir said he had suffered "bruises" as a result of being accused of finishing the government's money.

But he stressed that despite his unhappiness, he was not engineering the ouster of Abdullah,

# Dr M: Abdullah reneged on his promise

saying that it was "for Umno members to decide".

Excerpts from the press conference:

**Q: Can you describe your relationship with the present government? It looks very hostile?**

Well, when I decided to slop down, I gave an undertaking that I will not involve myself in politics that I would not interfere with the government. On the other hand, of course, there were certain things promised that would be done by the (p resent) government, but the government not only did not: do what was promised but, in fact, reversed many of the decisions made while the leader of the (present) government was (also) in the (previous) government.

There were no objections (then) and we agreed fully with all the proposals. And I had hoped that they would be carried out. I understand, of course, that new leaders want to have an impact and make their mark

during their period in power. The limes may change. But what was undertaken before would have to be carried out, (and) new things can be introduced.

So the decision not to keep to promises was not mine. I tolerated this for as much as possible, including the charge that I finished all of the government's money that the government was bankrupt and couldn't have any more projects.

I kept quiet but when something that is done that is really harmful, I think I would be failing (in) my duty as an ordinary citizen and an ex-PM if I don't direct, attention to this matters.

**Do you regret quitting?**

No, one cannot tell exactly what a person would do after he is out of

your control. I thought I made a good choice. I wouldn't know if I had picked somebody else these things would not happen. If I chose someone else, it might very well also happen.

**What was your biggest blunder?**

I have made many blunders in my career. I have helped many people only for them to stab me in the back. So it is a common trait for me. I'm in the habit of choosing the wrong people. But the present government can do a good job if they want to. The means are there but if they come under the influence of people who have other agenda, then I can't help (it).

**Who are you referring to?**

It is up to the press to know, you know more than I do.

**Do you think Pak Lah has stabbed you in the back?**

Minor bruises like saying I finished all their money when I know very well when the country has never been as rich as it is now. Having chosen him as my successor, in fact, he was not the first choice, he was second as he didn't have the highest votes. Najib had. I chose him and I expect a degree of gratefulness. But I was told that I had been involved in mega projects and finished the money.

## Najib: I have confidence in Pak Lah

**NEW DELHI:** Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak said he believed every leader who has been prime minister of Malaysia has done his best in accordance with the prevailing situation.

He said Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, during his term as the prime minister, had done what he felt was the best for the country.

Similarly, now, prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi was doing what he feels is best for the nation, he said.

"Therefore, all quarters should give their undivided support to Abdullah as the prime minister, more so when he was accorded the huge mandate and trust by the people in the last general election," he said.

Najib said he had confidence in Abdullah's leadership and was definitely with him in the administration of the country.

The deputy prime minister, who is on a week-long visit to India, was asked to comment on Mahathir's criticism of Abdullah at a press conference yesterday. - Bernama



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