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I'm not with the Opposition, says Dr M

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PUTRAJAYA: Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad has refuted claims that he is on the "Opposition's side", stressing his love and loyalty remained strongly with Umno, the country, and his religion and race.

"I have never taken sides with the Opposition. I love my party dearly but this does not mean that I support the party leadership," he said, at a dialogue session with the Malaysian Concerned Citizens Council ad-hoc committee (Prihatin) at the Perdana Leadership Foundation yesterday.

The former prime minister said that when he quarrelled with the late first prime minister Tunku Abdul Rahman, it was because he loved the party and wanted to save Umno.

He said that while loyalty to the party should remain steadfast, members must be brave enough to point out leaders' mistakes so they would not be repeated and "bring about destruction and downfall, and weaken the party".

"Leaders on the other hand, must not have this misconception that support for Umno means support for them too. When there is victory, leaders think it is because the people support them when the support may just have been for the party."

Unlike other races, particularly the Chinese, who would use their votes to send a message or make a point, the Malays, he claimed, would blindly support political parties, whether Umno or PAS.

Dr Mahathir admitted he had failed to alter the mindset of his race, particularly on the issue of loyalty, and pointing out mistakes and wrongdoings by leaders.

"If 400 years ago, they were loyal to the Sultans, now their loyalty is to political leaders," he said, adding that the Malays' fear of going against leaders was mainly because they did not want to be perceived as *derhaka* (treacherous), as loyalty was one of the race's traits.