

BN can't ignore Pakatan threat, says Dr M

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PUTRAJAYA: Barisan Nasional cannot ignore the possibility of Pakatan Rakyat forming the federal government in the near future, former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad said. He added that the statement by Parti Keadilan Rakyat de facto leader Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim that the opposition coalition could get over 30 BN members of parliament to defect, should be viewed seriously.

This, he said, was more so as many politicians were less interested in serving the nation but were more focused on how much and what they could get. Dr Mahathir was speaking after giving a talk on "National Sovereignty" at the 7th Perdana Discourse Series at the Perdana Leadership Foundation here, yesterday.

Dr Mahathir also said he had wanted to meet Datuk Seri Najib Razak since after the general election but had not been able to do so, allegedly because the deputy prime minister had not obtained "permission" from Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi to do so.

"It would be terrible to think that the prime minister does not trust his deputy. In my time, I trusted my deputy until he did something funny. Otherwise, I trusted my deputy," he said. In his keynote address, Dr Mahathir said Asean could well emulate the European Union once its members succeed in overcoming their differences.

He said that when closer ties were established, the grouping of 10 Southeast Asian nations could "speak with one voice" and (among others) introduce the use of a single currency like how the EU uses the euro.

The fear of losing the respective identities was not an issue as each country would still be using its local currency for domestic trading.

Dr Mahathir also raised the issue of the cancelled bridge project that was to replace the existing Causeway.

He expressed concern over talk that Singapore had joint rights over the Malaysian side of the Causeway and Second Link, just as Malaysia had rights over the republic's half.

He said in fact, Malaysia and Singapore only had sovereignty over their respective half of the linkages.