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Dr M drops support for Najib

Ex-PM changes mind, now won't say who he wants to see replace Abdullah

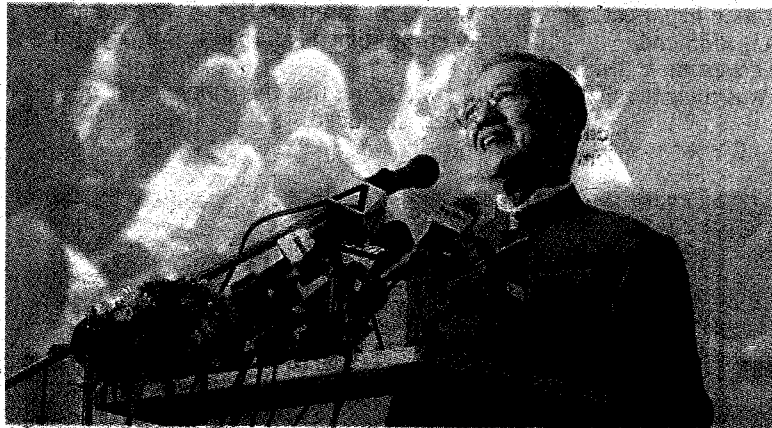
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PETALING JAYA: Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad has withdrawn his support for Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak to be Prime Minister.

In the past, the former Prime Minister had, countless times, openly said he wanted Najib to take over from Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi as Prime Minister.

"I feel we should not pick who the replacement should be. We should give the opportunity to a number of people so that we can evaluate them whether it is Pak Lah, Najib or (Tan Sri) Muhyiddin (Yassin).

"For now, I can't say who (should replace Abdullah). Although I have said before it should be Najib, I don't know why for 'some reason' I have now changed my mind," he said at a packed "Umno Post 12th General



Voicing out: Mahathir speaking to the audience during the forum.

Election: An "Assessment" forum organised by mykmu.net.

Dr Mahathir said the Cabinet and Umno supreme council were not relevant anymore because they were all just "yes" men to Abdullah.

He said those who tried to speak up were chastised for supposedly being disrespectful.

"They are then invited by the Prime Minister and given an explanation why they should agree with him," he

said, adding that their mouths were kept shut because they were afraid of losing their position and power.

He said Abdullah preferred to seek advice on government and party matters from "outsiders" such as family members including his son-in-law Khairy Jamaluddin rather than his own Cabinet and Umno supreme council members.

Speaking about the losses suffered by Barisan Nasional in the general election, Dr Mahathir said it was clear that the people, including Umno members, wanted Abdullah out.

Going back to history, he said Datuk Onn Jaafar, the founder of Umno, was a man of dignity as he quit the party when his idea of opening it up to non-Malays was rejected.

He noted that the first Prime Minister, Tunku Abdul Rahman, also resigned shortly after the 1969 election when Barisan lost ground.

"He withdrew on his own accord without being chased out by anyone. These two leaders were sensitive and listened to the views of the people and acted accordingly," he said.

Dr Mahathir said that, as Prime Minister for 22 years, he resigned respectably when he heard that people were questioning why "this old man" was staying for so long in the position.

He questioned why Abdullah was not prepared to do the same.

"Does he want to wait until Umno is destroyed?" he said.

Dr Mahathir also threw support behind Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah's proposal for the party to hold an extraordinary general assembly to discuss the polls results, and urged members to speak out and reform the party.

Dr Mahathir's son Datuk Mukhriz Mahathir said he was inclined to support Najib if he were to vie for the Umno president's post.