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Dr M refrains from criticising Ku Li

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KUALA LUMPUR: Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad has refrained from criticising Gua Musang MP Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah for using an Opposition platform to voice his opinion on the Kelantan oil royalty issue.

He said that he had also been critical of the Government in the past.

"I do not think it is acceptable to use the platform of the Opposition but I have also spoken out using smaller groups critical to the Government.

"I am not in a position to condemn," he said when asked for his reaction to Tengku Razaleigh's comment that the PAS-led Kelantan government was entitled to a 5% royalty for petroleum extracted off its waters.

Last Thursday, Tengku Razaleigh, who is a former Finance Minister and founding chairman of Petronas, told a gathering in Kota Baru that Kelantan was entitled to the royalty.

Speaking to reporters yesterday after giving a talk at the Asean Logics Conference at International Islamic University, Dr Mahathir said he had been very vocal against some of the moves made during the administration of Tun

Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

Dr Mahathir said he was of the view that Tengku Razaleigh was placing greater importance to Kelantan compared to the Federal Government.

"I suppose as a Kelantanese, he wants to see Kelantan get money. I am only guessing," he said.

Kelantan Umno Youth was upset that Tengku Razaleigh chose to make his stand at a gathering organised by the PAS-led government, where he shared the stage with Mentri Besar and PAS spiritual adviser Datuk Nik Aziz Nik Mat at the Sultan Mohammed IV Stadium in Kota Baru.

Asked if Tengku Razaleigh's actions would affect the voters confidence towards Umno, Dr Mahathir said: "Maybe, maybe. But whatever we do, we cannot win back Kelantan. Kelantanese have their own way of thinking."

In his speech, Dr Mahathir said that Asean countries, together with China, Japan and South Korea, should have a common trading currency in place of the US dollar.

He also renewed his calls for the formation of the East Asia Economic Group (EAEG), which would boost economic solidarity among the 10-member Asean group with the three north-east Asian countries.