

THE SUN

DATE: 19 / 10 / 2010

Mahathir: Najib inherited bad government

KUALA LUMPUR: Former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad took a dig at his successor, describing him as "totally incompetent" during his tenure as the fifth premier.

Giving his assessment of Datuk Seri Najib Razak's leadership, he said Najib had "inherited a bad government and is trying to put things right".

Mahathir said this at a press conference after a forum on "The Creation of a Global Citizen: Media Liberalisation and New Political Realities".

"He (Najib) inherited a bad

government, so he is trying to be better than Number Five. Number Five was totally incompetent and he (Najib) is trying to put things right," he said, referring to Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

Earlier, during a question and answer session at the forum after his speech, he took a swipe at Abdullah for the release of his former deputy Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

Mahathir was asked if he would have done anything differently with regard to Anwar, who was sacked from the government in 1998 and

subsequently charged with abuse of power and sodomy.

"I would have done the same. There were times I have been wrong, but in the case of Anwar Ibrahim, I was right," he said. His response was greeted with applause.

"I am no longer prime minister, and in fact at one time I was *persona non grata*, and that government which disliked me very much took action to reverse my decision and release Anwar. Subsequently, the government decided to charge Anwar with the

same thing (sodomy)."

Mahathir said there could only be two reasons for the government to have done so.

"There is yet another conspiracy, or maybe there is some truth in it - they could not invent another crime. I am not allowed to say that is the truth because it is up to the courts now," he said, referring to Anwar's second trial for sodomy.

Mahathir also said he had not "fiddled around with justice" in the case of Anwar when he was prime minister.

"You would have to take into confidence lots of people, and when you take into confidence hundreds of people, things are bound to leak.

"Did I go around doing that? It is not easy - not possible to have that many people and have a conspiracy."

"If I did this, there will be ample evidence that I manipulated. We don't hobknob with judges in this country. In my 22 years, I never invited judges to any functions in my house except for the chief justice or lord president (as they were known)," he said.