

# PM: Pakatan has done much

'Govt is of one mind to bring back the Malaysia we knew'



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**PUTRAJAYA:** Pakatan Harapan has achieved much in its first year, with the government being of one mind to "bring back the Malaysia we knew", said Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

"We don't go around shouting about our achievements. Nobody expected us to win. They said this coalition is fragile and that it will break up.

"But we have stayed together and worked together and we are very united and we have one single objective - to bring back the Malaysia that we knew.

"That, to me, is an achievement," he told the media in an interview to mark Pakatan's first anniversary of taking over Putrajaya.

Dr Mahathir said the fact that those who once asked him to resign, and then reinstated him, was also to him an achievement, which people tend to forget.

He outlined other accomplishments such as the Cabinet, despite being inexperienced, could perform as a government and the renegotiation of the East Coast Rail Link contract to save RM30bil.

"The first objective that we have achieved is to clean up the government. Today, people don't complain so much about demands (by government officers) for extra payment and all that.

"People are getting approvals (from government) much quicker."

He spoke of trying to resolve problems created by the previous government.

"They borrowed money by the billions. They punished people for not supporting them. Shifted them



**His take on things:** Dr Mahathir holding a special press conference marking Pakatan's first-year anniversary as the government. — Bernama

around, took away their jobs and all that. These are the people criticising us.

"We have removed quite a lot of people who are part of this. We have evidence about them," he said.

Dr Mahathir cited the upholding of the rule of law as another feather in the cap of the one-year-old government.

"There was no rule of law before, where people could be detained under serious accusations. Now, any accusations go to the courts. We accept the separation of power of the judiciary and executive."

Dr Mahathir also addressed the issue of the abolishment of tolls, which had come under public scrutiny as it was promised in Pakatan's election manifesto but had yet to be fulfilled by the government.

"When we decided to abolish it, we did not understand the cost. But now we realise that to abolish the tolls means the government has to buy all the highways and that costs a lot of money, plus a loan.

"The government has to pay RM30bil before the government can say 'no tolls would be collected'. The question is do we use the RM30bil for that or we use RM30bil, if we have, for other more important purposes?

"If you abolish the tolls, you earn nothing from the usage of the highways but we have to maintain the highways. The maintenance runs into billions again," he said.

Dr Mahathir lamented that many people would only support a government for the freebies.

"The previous government gave money to all kinds of people. The fishermen got a monthly pay of RM300 even though they don't go to catch fish. Bachelors got RM450. Under BR1M, they got some more.

"If we had continued that, we are bribing for support. We can't do that as we don't have the money since we did not steal. They then become upset; last time they got RM450, but now only RM100. That is why support for Pakatan has waned.

"Over time, they must learn that they will get their pay. We will improve their pay and also their other allowances. After some time, the people will appreciate. The public has to appreciate that they do not have to pay extra money for corrupt offices," he added.

Dr Mahathir advised Malaysians to better their living condition by thinking out of the box.

"You have two acres of land and you plant oil palm trees and expect

to be millionaires. Ask a padi farmer. When you cultivate rice and nothing else, the padi farmers will be very poor because you can't make a living by only planting rice.

"We want smart farming. We have many ideas but it will take time. This country imports RM60bil of food every year and most of these can be grown here but we don't."

Those who ventured into pineapple and mangosteen farming such as the farmers in Rompin are now reaping their rewards in millions, he said.

He said the increase in food prices is due the undervalued ringgit and middlemen, whose margin the government is trying to lower.

Dr Mahathir refuted claims that Pakatan had merely repackaged the ideas of the previous Barisan Nasional government.

"We are doing things the proper way. We are doing what is necessary and what is our responsibility as a government, without the corruption and cronyism.

"I don't think I am worse than Donald Trump (US President) or the British leaders or the French leaders who have to deal with the 'yellow vests'."

On his party, Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia (Bersatu), Dr Mahathir conceded that there were selfish members such as those who were unqualified yet assumed they could hold positions.

"I am not quite satisfied with Bersatu," he said.

"The culture of the Malays has changed. I have watched this for 70 years. When we first started Umno, people were giving their own money, they did not ask for anything (in return).

"In fact, there were so many people, when suggested to become candidates (for elections), they would say 'no, no, I am not qualified'. But this sort of thing does not happen now."

Now, some people would think they had the right to become prime minister even with little education, he added.

He said that he would definitely hand over the baton to PKR president Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim with no condition that the Port Dickson MP must continue his "mould" as PM.

Dr Mahathir, however, did not say when the handover would be.