

Dr Mahathir: Interim PM not necessary if it disrupts Covid battle

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The appointment is sensible if that individual agrees to establish the National Recovery Council, the former PM says

by SHAHEERA AZNAM SHAH

APPOINTING an interim prime minister (PM) amid the political upheaval would only be sensible if it does not get in the way of Malaysia's effort in managing the Covid-19 pandemic, said former PM Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

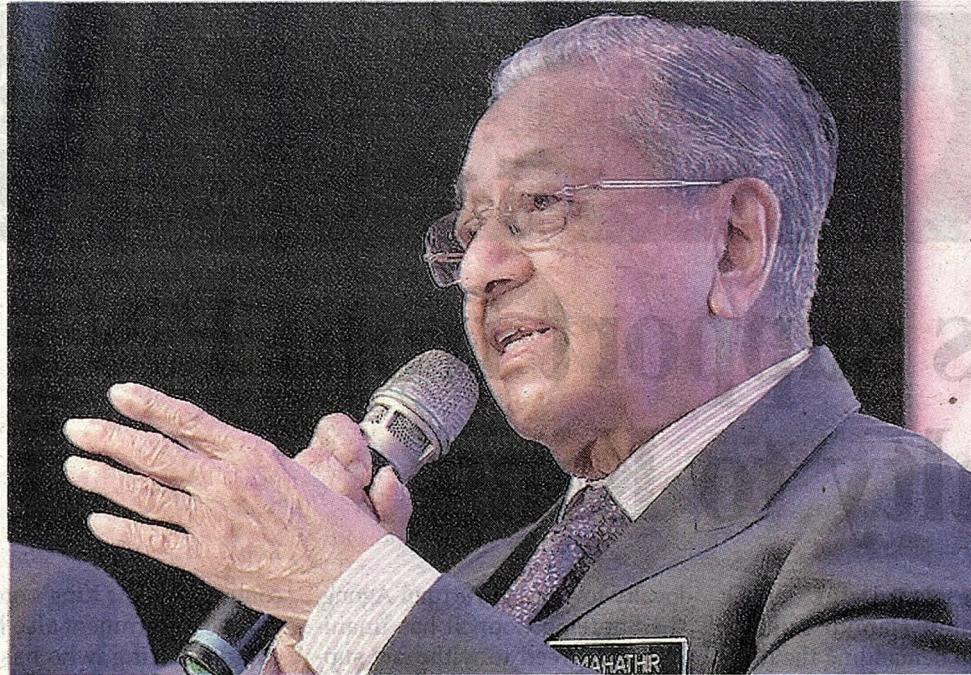
He added that the opposition parties have limited capacity to execute plans of action to tackle the coronavirus and manage its impact on the country and its people.

"We hope if there is an interim PM, it will be a PM who agrees to have this body (National Recovery Council). If we have another PM with the same idea and he wants to do everything, then nothing will be done.

"There are many people who feel that they could be a PM, but if they are an obstruction to the steps that we have suggested, then they are not going to help in managing this pandemic," he said during a virtual forum titled "Reset Malaysia — MPN: Solusi Selamatkan Malaysia" yesterday.

Dr Mahathir has been reiterating on several platforms over the proposal to establish a council consisting of experts from various fields who are focusing on the country's recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic.

He had proposed 20 individuals for the council and among them are Tan Sri Rafidah Aziz, Tan Sri Lin See Yan, Tan Sri Mohd Has-



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san Merican, Tan Sri Mohamed Azman Yahya and Prof Dr Jomo Kwame Sundram.

For the medical field, he proposed Tan Sri Dr Abu Bakar Suleiman, Prof Datuk Dr Adeeba Kamarulzaman, Prof Datuk Dr Lam Sai Kit, Datuk Dr Musa Nordin, Datuk Dr Amar Singh HSS dan Dr Kumitaa Theva Das.

The former PM first presented the idea to the King on June 10, hoping it would emulate the National Operations Council or Majlis Gerakan Negara established following the May 13 incident in 1969.

The idea was adopted by the Perikatan Nasional-led government when it decided

to set up the council that is chaired by Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin while Finance Minister Tengku Datuk Seri Zafrul Tengku Abdul Aziz acts as the council coordinator.

Speaking of the solutions to the pandemic, Dr Mahathir said there are only two measures that could curb the coronavirus — abiding the physical distancing and vaccination.

"Although we do not have much power, we will try our best to educate people to implement social distancing as it is hard to do. With the rally that took place on Monday, I disobey the SOP myself and

I admit my wrongdoing.

"And when the first measure couldn't help, then came the vaccination, which we have seen went through a lot of bureaucracy in the delivery and distribution," he said.

He added that the government has been prioritising the procedures rather than speeding up the vaccination process.

Meanwhile, Consultant Pediatrician at KPJ Damansara Specialist Hospital Dr Musa Mohd Nordin, who was also named by Dr Mahathir to join the National Recovery Council, urged the National Pharmaceutical Regulatory Agency to widen Malaysia's vaccine portfolio and add another mRNA-type vaccine to improve the efficacy.

"The efficacy of the Sinovac vaccine has shown to reduce by three times after the number of days it was shot.

"Thus, the vaccine committee has to think of ways to increase the immunity of our Sinovac recipients, which is about eight million of our vaccine population in Malaysia.

"We have another mRNA vaccine aside from Pfizer, which is the Moderna, why not include that in our portfolio?" he said.

He also added that Malaysia needs to have a comprehensive Covid-19 testing mechanism, which is seen as the bedrock of crisis management and distribute the responsibility to the private sector to ease the pressure on the public healthcare system.

"The testing needs to be made easier and affordable so people could easily get their own Covid-19 test at private clinics or hospitals that are not a burden to their finances.

"But until now, we have not seen a ceiling price on those tests," he said.