

Dr M questions rationale of appointing Zahid as DPM

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NST - 31/12/2022

KUALA LUMPUR: Former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad yesterday questioned the rationale of appointing Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi, who is facing court charges, as deputy prime minister.

In a Twitter post, he cited Article 33A of the Federal Constitution, which allowed the Yang di-Pertuan Agong to cease holding the role if charged with an offence and compared it with Zahid, who is facing more than 40 court charges for corruption.

"It is obvious that being charged with an offence is so serious that a person such as the Yang di-Pertuan Agong would cease to exercise the functions of the Yang di-Pertuan Agong.

"It does not say that he would have to be found guilty before His Majesty ceases to exercise his function. Being charged is clearly serious enough for the Constitution to prescribe the cessation of his function."

Citing the provision, Dr Mahathir said reform was necessary when "a lesser functionary" such as the DPM, who faced over 40 charges, continued to hold the post.

"Is the DPM a more senior functionary that he should be better treated than the Yang di-Pertuan Agong?"

"There is a need for reform here, I think," he wrote.

Analysts, however, questioned the rationale behind Dr Mahathir's criticism, noting that the latter, during his time as prime minister in 2018, had appointed Lim Guan Eng as finance minister. Lim, they said, had also been facing corruption charges then.

Lim, who was the then DAP sec-

retary-general, was facing corruption charges over the purchase of a bungalow below the market price in 2016. The case was dropped in 2018 after Pakatan Harapan won the 14th General Election.

Political analyst Azmi Hassan said Dr Mahathir's criticism of Zahid was baffling.

"This (strategy) is overkill as he (Dr Mahathir) did the same during his tenure as prime minister by appointing Lim as finance minister. It can also be argued that Dr Mahathir, in appointing Lim, was seeking to appease DAP which had won the most seats,"

he said, noting that Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim was also believed to have appointed Zahid to appease Barisan Nasional, adding that his criticism doesn't appear to hold water.

Azmi was referring to Dr Mahathir's latest criticism on the appointment of Zahid as deputy prime minister.

Azmi added that the argument by Dr Mahathir was also "a disservice to the opposition" as he had no moral high ground.

Facebook users had also criticised Dr Mahathir for his attack on Zahid.

Facebook user Alfred Oh noted that Dr Mahathir had done the same in appointing Lim during his time as prime minister despite the latter facing a corruption charge back then.

"He also chose Lim Guan Eng aka the world's best finance minister at the time when he was charged with corruption."

Another Facebook user, Shahrizal Mustafa said: "He did the same when appointing Lim Guan Eng as the minister of finance."



Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad