

**Blogs An Alternative Channel To Speak Up, Says Dr Mahathir**  
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KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 9 (Bernama) -- Alternative channels like blogs can be made platforms by political leaders to speak up, said former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

"We can use blogs to voice our views if cannot speak out in our parties. In (political) parties, sometimes they (leaders) are not willing to listen.

"We have freedom of speech. So we can speak up, but if others are not willing to listen, there is nothing that we can do," he told reporters after delivering a talk entitled "Dilema Ekonomi Bangsa Malaysia" (The Economic Dilemma of Malaysians) at Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) in Serdang near here.

He said this when asked to comment on remarks made by Umno veteran Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah yesterday that he (Tengku Razaleigh) formed the Angkatan Amanah Merdeka (AMANAH) non-governmental organisation because there was no room in the party for him to voice his views.

However, in an immediate reaction Deputy Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin, who is also Umno deputy president, denied Umno prevented members from speaking up.

On the suggestion by the DAP that the size of the civil service needs to be trimmed, Dr Mahathir said the opposite was the case as Malaysia's population was growing.

"To reduce the number of civil servants by sacking people, that is very bad.

"When I first took over as the prime minister, we had a population of about 13 million but when I stepped down, our population had grown to 26 million. The population is increasing, so we need more staff," he said, adding that privatisation was a better alternative to cut public expenditure.

He also said the government needed to be careful in wealth distribution to avoid discontent among the people and to ensure Malaysia's goal to be a developed nation by 2020 could be achieved.

He said in the race to become a high income country, the lower income group must not be marginalised.

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