

**Dr M shows his mettle with jibe at Pakatan**  
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**IN HIS ELEMENT: 'Opposition up to no good'**

GEORGE TOWN: HE may have turned 87 yesterday but former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad showed no sign of slowing down.

He turned on his charm and mesmerised a hall full of people and had them in stitches talking about past and current political issues.

Taking a swipe at Pakatan Rakyat, Dr Mahathir said the word "Pakatan" itself was an ironic reflection of what the loose alliance, formed by Parti Keadilan Rakyat, DAP and Pas, really stood for.

"Pakat in Malay means to conspire ... when people are up to no good they will pakat (conspire).

"Barisan Nasional does not pakat, we co-operate as a coalition and fight for the good of all races.

"That is why, like it or not, we have to reject these parties who have resorted to pakat-pakat.

"I know the kind of people they are," he said to rousing applause during a dinner with representatives of non-governmental organisations here on Monday night.

Dr Mahathir also spoke at length on the power-sharing formula by BN and how it had worked well to keep the peace and harmony among the various races in the country.

Acknowledging that no government in the world could claim to be perfect, he said the biggest challenge faced by BN was during the financial crisis at the end of the 1990s.

Elaborating, Dr Mahathir said many Chinese businessmen were on the brink of bankruptcy then and would have gone bust if not for the action taken by the BN-led government.

He said the Chinese repaid their faith in the government by throwing their full support behind BN in the 1999 general election and returned the coalition to power with an overwhelming majority.

Dr Mahathir also said sometimes the biggest problems were caused, not by the party, but those leading it.

"That is why I cannot understand why some people who are the biggest liars can still get the support of the people."

Also present at the dinner, which included guests rising to sing Happy Birthday and Dr Mahathir cutting his birthday cake, was Bayan Baru independent member of parliament Datuk Seri Zahrain Mohamed Hashim.

Zahrain, in his speech, dared Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, who has been rallying round for a debate with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak, to take on Dr Mahathir instead.

He said there was no reason for Anwar to challenge Najib as he could always lock horns with the prime minister during parliamentary sittings.

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