

**'Mahathirism' is dead and gone, says Dr M
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KUALA LUMPUR, July 9 — Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today the idea of "Mahathirism" was a figment of Lim Kit Siang's imagination, pointing out that his DAP rival's campaign against the revival of the ex-premier's brand of politics was an exercise in futility.

The DAP veteran had last week denied harbouring hatred for long-time political rival Dr Mahathir, suggesting instead that he only disliked the influential leader's brand of politics.

In the escalating war of words between the political veterans, the DAP parliamentary leader alleged that Dr Mahathir has been working very hard to keep his "Mahathirism" alive in the ruling Umno through corruption and cronyism.

Lim also disagreed that former prime minister Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi was voted out of power for mistreating his predecessor, Dr Mahathir, saying instead that Abdullah, or "Pak Lah", had lost in Election 2008 for failing to dismantle the "Mahathir legacy" of corruption, cronyism and abuses of power.

"I wonder why Lim Kit Siang is so afraid of me. His latest fear is about what he calls 'Mahathirism'. I don't know what 'Mahathirism' is, but obviously it conjures in the mind of Kit Siang something fearful. So he has declared his intention to fight 'Mahathirism'.

"Actually 'Mahathirism' died when Datuk Seri (now Tun) Abdullah took over from me in 2003. He changed Umno, the BN and the government so much that they no longer resemble the institutions I used to know. I had to resign from Umno," Dr Mahathir said in a posting on his blog today.

Dr Mahathir was a strident critic of Abdullah, and had left Umno in 2008. He rejoined the party when Datuk Seri Najib Razak took over as PM from Abdullah in 2009.

"Najib is more friendly but he is not that close to me. He has his own team of advisors. His policies are his own. So why fear 'Mahathirism'? It is dead and gone," said Dr Mahathir.

Dr Mahathir added that he was now actively campaigning for Umno because it was "payback time" for the party's support for him when he was PM.

Reacting to Lim's attacks against him, Dr Mahathir said he did not care "whether he (Lim) destroys 'Mahathirism' or not."

"It is an exercise in futility as 'Mahathirism' is a figment of his imagination. He should not be afraid of this toothless tiger figuratively speaking."

Despite retiring in 2003, Dr Mahathir continues to loom large over the Malaysian political landscape and has been seen as Barisan Nasional's (BN) lead campaigner of late, ahead of polls that must be called soon.

But Lim has repeatedly rubbished Dr Mahathir's assertions and, in recent weeks, accused Umno of "playing a dangerous game of lies" by stoking fears that could split Malaysia along racial lines in its bid to win over Malay voters at the polls.

He said voters must choose between a government that promotes racial policies and one that espouses democracy, good governance and equitable economic practices in the coming general election.

Lim has also claimed that Najib's uncertainty in winning the next general election has resulted in "desperate" tactics by Umno leaders and strategists.

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